THE UPANISADS

IN STORY AND DIALOGUE

BY
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FOREWORD BY
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FOREWORD

Our political freedom is not an end in itself. It is a means, among other things, to our cultural liberation. If we have to check the tendency towards national non-being which has been at work for some decades, we can do so only if we discover our traditional pattern of life as it is found in the ancient classics like the Upaniṣads and apply it as far as possible to our individual and social development. The Upaniṣads contain the essential ideas, the governing principles of our cultural life. They do not speak to us of limited dogmas or of ethical and theological rigidities. They deal with man's search for the eternal which is the source of truth and joy. The very name Brahman suggests that the questing spirit in man is due to the activity of God. The aspiration to see God is itself derived from God.

Authentic spiritual life does not reject any aspect of truth. Body, life and mind are not to be despised; they are the conditions or instruments of the life of spirit in man, the means by which spirit gives itself existence. There is a responsibility laid on man as an individual to integrate his life, to relate the present to the past and the future, to live in time as well as among the eternal energies. We should be anchored in the centre of spirit but open ourselves to all the winds that blow, receive all the influences, assimilate them to our own way of living and work for a world which has balance and equilibrium.

The men of spirit, those filled with serenity, wisdom and joy, are lovers of humanity. Sureśvara says in *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* (IV. 69) that "to one who has knowledge of the self, non-hatred and other virtues come off naturally, without any effort".

utpannātmaprabodhasya tu advesṭratvādayo guṇāḥ
ayatanto bhavanty asya na tu sādhanarūpiṇaḥ.

With their inward being which is more sensitive, more complex and more subtle, they devote their energies to raising the world to higher levels.

It is essential for us all to know something of the central principles of these great scriptures. For the convenience of those who have not the leisure or the capacity to understand the original texts, Mr. Diwakar has given in this book an exposition of the central ideas of the Upaniṣads in the form of stories and dialogues. The book is written with conspicuous ability and earnest conviction. I hope it will find a large circle of readers.

MOSCOW,
30th December 1949.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many volumes have been written on the Upaniṣads by scholars and writers both western and eastern. Being the most ancient philosophic heritage of humanity, they have formed the subject matter of discussion and dissertations, exposition and controversy for centuries. In the past, philosophers like Schopenhauer, critics like Deussen, scholars like Macdonald, orientalists like Prof. Max Müller have written exhaustively and very appreciatively about them. Recently eminent Indian scholars like Prof. Das Gupta, Prof. Ranade, Dr Radhakrishnan have devoted special attention to the Upaniṣads and explained the philosophy therein in a manner that is more familiar to the western mind. Modern rishis and thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore and Shri Aurobindo Ghose, who may be said to have digested the teaching of the Upaniṣads, have also written about them in their own beautiful and engaging phrase which is more easily understood by the modern readers. All this is to be found in the English language and this is in addition to the very rich, illuminating and learned commentaries in Sanskrit by the great Ācāryas Śankara, Rāmānuja and Madhwa. There is a vast amount of literature on the subject which may well keep one engaged for years, if a thorough study is undertaken.

Here I am certainly not trying to increase the number of volumes written on that subject. Nor do I want to burden this introduction with quotations from the writings of the scholars. My intention is far more simple, my role far more humble. I have tried here to simplify the study of the Upaniṣads to the utmost possible extent.

I am writing for the lay reader who is not interested in the controversies and in the contending schools of thought. Every one is certainly welcome to study the text in the original. Nay, I would invite one and all to do it. But even before the text and the translations are taken up this small book may well serve as a signpost that leads to this rich garden of philosophic thought. This small book is meant for those who wish to be acquainted with Upaniṣadic thought in its bare simplicity shorn of all abstruse references and complicated subtleties and who have neither the leisure nor the capacity immediately to probe into the original Sanskrit texts and yet feel drawn to the grand teachings of the ancient rishis of India.

That is why I have chosen to write in the form of stories, anecdotes or dialogues rather than in the form of essays or dissertations. This form lends itself to a free handling of the subject and gives scope for the insertion of those small details necessary for creating a suitable background. One is free to drop all non-essentials and superfluities that must be included in a mere translation or a thorough treatise on the text. Nor do I claim to give here everything that the Upaniṣads contain. I have tried to give the main philosophical tendencies and thoughts in the Upaniṣads and presented them in the setting of the Upaniṣads themselves. Much that is local in colour, much that is understandable only if one studies those times and that environment have found no place here. The references, for instance, to the many *Upāsanas* or methods of worship as also to the sacrifices current in those days have been dropped. One would, however, expect in the stories greater details about the *āśramas* or forest dwellings of the sages, about the assemblies at the time of sacrifices, about *gurukulas* or homes of preceptors, and about the customs and manners of those days. But

that would have swollen the bulk of the book beyond the limits set by me and would have necessitated the repetitions of descriptions in the different stories. Instead, I have given here a general description of the milieu of the stories. This will serve as a background to the stories and dialogues as well as to the Upaniṣadic society and also to the whole of the teaching that is contained in the Upaniṣads.

The Upaniṣads are not literary productions as such. They were not written as literature. They do not claim to portray the life of those times. Nor are they a "criticism of life" in the sense in which Mathew Arnold used the term. They are in the main concerned with what is called spiritual knowledge or knowledge of the spirit as distinguished from knowledge of matter or of the material world. The Upaniṣads are in short an inquiry into the ultimate truth. Therefore, the aspects of social life or environment that have been described therein are merely incidental and occasional. But some understanding of them is helpful for the proper appreciation of the teaching of the Upaniṣads as a whole.

The society of the Upaniṣadic times seems to have been obviously very simple, without the complications that usually arise when the economic structure of a society becomes complex. The cross-section of the social picture that appears in the Upaniṣads does not cut across the whole society of those days. But it certainly comprises such sections of society as were busy with philosophical problems. No doubt it is always a small section of society that takes interest in such problems, but it is, nevertheless, an important section. It always remains an aristocracy. Therefore, in the picture that we see before us in the Upaniṣads, we come across princes, kings, Kṣatriyas, some Brāhmins and priests. There are very few ladies,

though it is very significant that the few that are there take a prominent part in open philosophical discussions even in those remote days. Young men, *brahmacāris* and boys are many and it is very refreshing to meet them there. The Vaiśyas, the Śudras, the common masses put in no appearance. Artisans, agriculturists, herdsmen, fishermen and such other classes are not to be found in the Upaniṣads at all.

The scenes in the Upaniṣads are usually laid in the *āśramas, gurukulas*, assemblies of kings and places of sacrifice. We have very few *gurukulas* today. Sacrifices are rarer still. Though there are kings and princes enough in India even now, we hardly hear of kings like Janaka eager to arrange philosophical discussions in their assemblies. *Āśramas,* however, have persisted in India. Like levers that act more effectively from a distance these *āśramas,* conveniently away and isolated from the bustle of society, have been influencing social life in India to a great extent.

A typical *āśrama* of the Upaniṣadic period used to be situated away from crowded cities and towns and conveniently distant even from the surrounding villages, with beautiful natural surroundings as a setting. The dwellings there were very simple and constructed out of forest material, such as bamboos, twigs, creepers, dry leaves and so on, ready at hand. That is why *āśramas* have often been described as forest dwellings and an *āśrama* house as *parṇa-kuṭi* or cottage of leaves. More often than not an *āśrama* was near a clear lake or by a flowing river, but "far from the madding crowd".

Persons who had decided upon leading a spiritual life, a life of *tapas* or penance, of sacrifice, of renunciation and resignation usually lived there. Spirituality has often been associated with poverty and simplicity, with renunciation,

with desireless service, and with detached action. So, the inmates of an *āśrama* always lived in simple yet chaste surroundings. They invested the whole atmosphere with purity of thought and action. They had not only no ill-will against anyone but had all the goodwill in the world for every one in the universe, and they prayed for the welfare of all creation. The study of the Vedas and the other branches of knowledge, teaching the same to others, performance of sacrifice, penance, meditation, spiritual discipline and experiment, the cultivation of the highest virtues of truth, forgiveness and others, doing of good deeds—these were the main activities of an *āśrama*. It was not always that the *āśramawāsis* or dwellers in the *āśrama* were *sannyāsis* or those who had wholly renounced life. Often enough great rishis lived in their *āśramas* with their wives and children along with such other people as chose to live with them. Thus an *āśrama* was a radiating centre of spiritual influence to the surrounding country. It was a focus for all seekers after truth to come together to take advantage of each other's experience by mutual exchange of thought. *Āśramas* differed from each other as much or as little as individuals and often the impress of the chief person in the *āśrama* was found on everything and was permeating the whole atmosphere. It was in such *āśramas* that most of the philosophic discourses were held. They were sometimes called *Āraṇyakas* because they were held in *araṇyas* or forests.

If the *āśramas* were the homes of sages and seers and radiated spiritual influence, the *gurukulas* were educational institutions of a definite type. The word *gurukula* literally means the family of the guru or the preceptor. Children of a tender age were sent to live in the families of the gurus. They were treated as children of the household of

the guru. They were casually to serve the family and the guru while receiving education. There used to be no fee as such for the education received. It was left entirely to the discretion of the disciple or his guardian to pay or not to pay what suited him. It is needless to say that no disciple neglected the payment to the guru. The *guru-dakṣiṇā* or the fees of the guru were as a rule paid according to the capacity and convenience of the disciple. It was absolutely voluntary. This made it possible for the poorest to receive education. Even today, in places like Banāras, we find a number of *pandits* and *śāstris*, learned in the scriptures and the laws, conducting free classes without any expectation of fees. Thus even now the tradition has been kept up though in very few places.

As regards education in the *gurukulas*, it was imparted regularly by the guru himself and was never neglected. *Swādhyāya* or learning that part of the Veda which has been assigned to a particular family was insisted upon as one's bounden duty. Other learning was additional. As soon as a child attained the age of eight, it was thought eligible for being initiated by the *Upanayana* ceremony which meant that the child was led out to the guru and given the *mantra* or the secret word. Usually between the ages of eight and twelve, children were sent to the *gurukulas*. They lived there as students for twelve years. That was the period of *brahmacarya* or the period of spiritual discipline. It is clear from some of the stories in the Upaniṣads that the children as well as their guardians were very eager for education. At the end of that period students were sent home with suitable advice and instructions.

The range of studies in those days seems to have been wide enough. When Nārada was asked by Sanatkumāra as to what he had learnt, he mentioned quite a number

of *vidyās* including astrology, jugglery and the art of taming serpents. The *vidyās* mentioned here in all number sixteen. But all of them were *aparā vidyā* or lower learning. It was *parā vidyā* or higher knowledge that was prized most. In fact the Upaniṣads are concerned only with *parā vidyā*. The subject matter of the Upaniṣads is the knowledge of the spirit, of the inner being, of spiritual life that leads to eternal peace and immortality.

The assemblies summoned by kings had nothing peculiar about them in the Upaniṣadic times. They were like other courts or *darbārs* held by princes of the present day. Possibly there was not so much pomp then as there is today. Such assemblies were, however, sometimes the scenes of great debates on philosophic subjects. Kings like Janaka and Ajātaśatru were enthusiastic about such debates and encouraged them by offering tempting prizes. The spiritual bouts that took place seem to have been quite interesting and instructive.

The Upaniṣads not only do not encourage sacrifices but positively discourage them. In fact they liken sacrifices to 'leaky boats' which are incapable of taking us beyond the sea of existence. They can only take us to heavens from where we have to come down after a brief stay. But, though discredited, sacrifices were still current in Upaniṣadic times. It seems that advantage was taken of sacrificial occasions to hold discussions on philosophical subjects. Today sacrifices are a rarity in India and a common Brahmin does not even know their technique, nor their significance. In the surviving ritual some sacrifices have been abbreviated and what remains is the offering of a few morsels of food into fire. In olden times a sacrifice was a very big function. There were several *yajñas* to be performed. Each one had a different technique, different gods to be propitiated for securing

different objects and results. Different *mantras* of the Vedas were chanted by different priests in different sacrifices. For instance, the *Hotris* would chant the *Ṛg-Veda*, the *Udgātris* would sing the *Sāma-Veda*, the *Adhwaryu* would restrict himself to the *Yajur-Veda*, and *Brahma* or the highest priest would use the *mantras* from the *Atharwa-Veda* and would also supervise the whole sacrifice. The main action in each sacrifice was the offering of oblations to some god or gods through fire which was supposed to carry it to the destination. The gods were supposed to be satisfied by these offerings and were supposed in their turn to shower on the performers of the sacrifices the gifts within their power. Constructing the *yajñaśālā* or sacrificial hall, building the *yajñakuṇḍ* or the fire-pit, igniting the sacrificial fire by rubbing of sticks, then offering of oblations into the fire to the accompaniment of *mantras* were all highly technical and required special training. Thus a special class of priests sprang up and gradually the *yajamān* or the householder on whose behalf the sacrifice was performed was reduced to the position of a mere onlooker. The *yajamān* was, however, the paymaster, and he was supposed to enjoy the fruit of the sacrifice. The Upaniṣads reduced the sacrifices to a very subordinate position and raised the status of *tapas* or penance, of meditation, of knowledge, of spiritual discipline.

The Upaniṣads militated against the whole of *Karma-kāṇḍa* or the path of rituals. There was by that time deep dissatisfaction about the whole of the ritualistic way of life. That way had already lost its charm and had become mechanical and meaningless. There was a sense of frustration in the air and at the same time a spirit of inquiry was abroad. The sages of the Upaniṣads were not only for discarding ritualism, but they were equally

sceptical about mere intellectual efforts. They were for digging deep into the inner consciousness. They did so and by following the promptings of intuition found for us spiritual illumination which satisfies the soul a thousand times more than either the pleasures of the senses or the deductions of the intellect. One of the rishis says that the knower of Brahman who is not cursed by personal desires goes beyond the physical, vital, psychological, intellectual planes and enters the world of pure bliss and wanders about singing and dancing with joy. "I am one and alone and the enjoyer of infinite bliss", will be the burden of his song. In trying to follow the mystic path of intuition some of the rishis reach ecstatic heights where there is no consciousness either of the one or of the many, where pure bliss exists by itself. One cannot say whether one is conscious or unconscious in such a condition as this.

Such were the surroundings and such the atmosphere in which the Upaniṣads came into existence. They retain the spirit of enquiry, the eager quest, and the zest for incessant seeking. They never deteriorate into settled dull dogma. Therefore they have a freshness and a simplicity about them which is always absent from more laboured compositions. They never seem to become old in spite of their hoary age which is not less than twenty-five centuries. There is an aroma about Upaniṣadic phrase which lingers long in the memory.

Now before passing on to the subject matter of the Upaniṣads, their place in Indian philosophy and such other subjects, we should know something about their name, number, age, and their occurrence.

The original Upaniṣads are in Sanskrit. The language used is not archaic like that of the Vedas. In fact, except parts of some Upaniṣads, all the ten important ones can

be understood by a student of Sanskrit without any special training. Sanskrit is a wonderfully elastic language and very rich in the capacity to connote things. It is not at all unusual in Sanskrit for words and expressions to bear more than one meaning, each one as good as the others. The word Upaniṣad has been given two meanings. Upaniṣad means 'sitting near'. By connotation it means 'teaching given while sitting near'. It also means 'destroying completely'. By connotation it means 'advice capable of destroying ignorance'. Both the meanings are good enough. The first in the sense that it is the intimate teaching of a guru to his dear disciple. The second meaning is as good since it means spiritual knowledge that destroys all ignorance which binds us to the sense world. Both these meanings are equally justified in the case of Yājñavalkya's teaching to Maitreyī which is in every sense a real 'Upaniṣad'. Maitreyī discards the offer of wealth and the life of the senses. This endears her more to her husband. He calls her nearer to his side and then teaches her the mystic knowledge which destroys all ignorance and opens for her the way to eternal bliss.

There is no unanimity among the scholars about the number of the Upaniṣads. Some say that there were one hundred and fifty. Others say that there were one hundred and eight. The *Muktikopaniṣad* mentions one hundred and eight. Today one hundred and eight Upaniṣads are extant. In A.D. 1656 some Upaniṣads were translated into the Persian language from a collection of fifty. The list of those fifty is, however, not available today. Śankarācārya, the great commentator, recognizes only fourteen of the Upaniṣads as Vedic. Other Ācāryas have relied on ten Upaniṣads only as authentic and authoritative. In fact, if we study the ten well-known Upaniṣads, namely, *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*,

Aitareya, Taittirīya, Praśna, Chāndogya and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, practically nothing new is found in the other Upaniṣads. The only other Upaniṣad which may be said to contain original ideas expressed in eloquent language is the *Śwetāśvetara*. Most of the others are obviously later compositions and do not concern us here.

The names of the ten Upaniṣads may be dealt with next. Some of those names attract attention. Not all of them can be explained or derived cogently and intelligently. *Īśa* and *Kena* are so named because they begin with those words! *Kaṭha* occurs in a *Brāhmaṇa* of that name in the *Yajur-Veda*. *Muṇḍaka* means a razor or one whose head has been shaved clean by a razor! That means a *sannyāsi*. This Upaniṣad was so named possibly because it was meant for a man who was about to adopt the fourth *āśrama* or stage of life, namely *sannyās*. *Māṇḍūkya* is so called, perhaps, because the rishi Manḍuka was its author, or stages of consciousness are like hops of a frog. The name *Praśnopaniṣad* explains itself. It contains six *praśnas* or questions. *Aitareya* was composed by Mahīdās Aitareya and hence the name. *Taittirīya* has a peculiar story about it. For some reason or other the guru Yājñavalkya felt very much offended with one of his disciples. In a fit of anger he demanded back his teaching. The able disciple is said to have vomitted all the teaching! Some sages for fear of being cursed by the enraged guru assumed the form of *tittirīs* or partridges and ate up the whole teaching that had been vomitted! The name *Chāndogya* cannot easily be explained. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* only means a big story or composition written or composed in an *araṇya* or forest.

Even the ten Upaniṣads or the eleven mentioned above do not all belong to the same age or period. Though there is no unanimity about the exact dates of the most ancient Upaniṣads, it is generally agreed that they date

back beyond the age of Gautama the Buddha, that is beyond 500 B.C. They are obviously later than the *Ṛg-Veda Sūktas*. For a lay reader it is sufficient to know that the age of the Upaniṣads is somewhere between 500 B.C. and 1500 B.C. if not earlier.

The Upaniṣads are not compositions as such. They were not written for the sake of writing. Nor were they written by one man. They are records of spoken words. Those spoken words must have been transmitted by word of mouth for years. At some stage they were either written down at different places, in different *āśramas* by different people or were written as notes by gurus for teaching their disciples. Somehow, they have come down to us in the form in which they exist today. This history of the writing of the Upaniṣads explains the variety of form and style and language, the loose structure, the repetition, the simplicity, and the terminology of the Upaniṣads. At places the touch of inspiration, the gush of ecstatic emotion, the flow of eloquence are obvious. Dull, drab patches are not rare. The dialogue is naturally the ruling form in the Upaniṣads. Question and answer predominate. But the dialogues in the Upaniṣads never descend to boring catechism nor do they deteriorate into intellectual fencing and logic-chopping. There is nothing that is readymade and mechanical and nothing that is poured into a pattern. Everything seems to be fresh, it is taken from life and the question as well as answer are genuine in spirit. They are not dogmas beaten out into preplanned phrases in the form of set questions and answers.

The Upaniṣads form parts of the Vedas which are four in number. The *Ṛg-Veda* is the oldest and some scholars carry the date of some of the *Sūktas* or verses even beyond five thousand years. At any rate no scholar dares to

ascribe to the oldest verses in the *Ṛg-Veda* any date that is nearer than three thousand years ago. As there seem to have been no alphabets and no writing at that time, the compositions were handed down from mouth to mouth for centuries and their preservation in the original form is a marvel of memory as well as of persistent attachment and devotion to accepted tradition. In fact memorizing and repeating things with faultless accent developed into a fine art. Even today there are persons who can repeat all the Vedas in an impressive and correct manner which is bound to strike any one as a great feat both of memory and of voice. This method and art of memorizing and repeating later came to be called *śikṣā*, a distinct branch of study. The other three Vedas are the *Yajur-Veda*, the *Sāma-Veda* and the *Atharwa-Veda*. It would be out of place here to describe in detail the contents of the Vedas, their nature and so on. But in order to understand the place of the Upaniṣads in the Vedas, the position they hold in the religious literature of the Hindus, the role they play in the philosophy of India, we must know their relation to the Vedas.

The Vedas are the basic sacred books of the Hindus and their authority is unquestioned. He who does not believe in the authority of the Vedas as an infallible guide is looked upon as an atheist or a heretic. It is the orthodox belief that the Vedas took shape first in the mind of Brahma and he created the world according to them. He then made them manifest in the minds of the *Dṛṣṭāras* or seers like Marīci, Atri and Angiras. Through those seers the Vedas were given to humanity. It was Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyana who first classified the Vedas into four and then taught those four to Pailaka, Vaiśampāyana, Jaimini and Sumantu. They then taught them to their sons and disciples. According to the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, the *Ṛg-Veda* had

twenty-one *śākhās* or branches, the *Yajur-Veda* had one hundred and nine, *Sāma-Veda* one thousand and *Atharwa-Veda* fifty. But ninety per cent of them are wholly lost today!

Whatever the traditional belief, it is needless to say that the Vedas were composed by poets under the influence of religious inspiration which gave the Vedas their self-sustaining quality. Sāyaṇa, the greatest commentator (14th century) on the Vedas defined them as follows: "They are books or compositions that teach us the extra-ordinary or supernatural remedies for obtaining the desirable and for escaping from the undesirable in life." Swāmi Vivekānanda has, however, given a fine definition of the Vedas by calling them "books of knowledge".

Now let us see as to how the Vedas and the Upaniṣads stand related. In a way it is an anomaly to speak of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads as two separate things. In fact the Upaniṣads are part and parcel of the Vedas themselves. The most important ten Upaniṣads come at the end of the four different Vedas. Therefore the Upaniṣads are called *Vedānta*, the end portions of the Vedas. The philosophy taught in the Upaniṣads is also called *Vedānta*. It means the philosophy which is at the end of the Vedas. While the whole of the earlier portion of the Vedas is supposed to preach *karma* or action, this last portion containing the Upaniṣads is supposed to deal mainly with *jñāna* or knowledge.

The Vedas consist of two sets of compositions: (1) the *Samhitas* or hymns to be chanted at the time of the sacrifices and at other times; (2) the *Brāhmaṇas* which deal with the mode of performing *yajñas*, with history and tradition, explanations and commentaries. The *Brāhmaṇa* portion contains the Upaniṣads also. Sometimes part of the *Brāhmaṇas* are called *Āraṇyakas*. The ten principal

Upaniṣads are attached to the different Vedas as follows:

Iśa	*Yajur-Veda*
Kena	*Sāma-Veda*
Kaṭha	*Yajur-Veda*
Muṇḍaka	*Atharwa-Veda*
Māṇḍūkya	*Atharwa-Veda*
Praśna	*Atharwa-Veda*
Aitareya	*Ṛg-Veda*
Taittirīya	*Yajur-Veda*
Chāndogya	*Sāma-Veda*
Bṛhadāraṇyaka	*Yajur-Veda*

It is impossible in a short introduction like this to deal adequately with all the subjects treated in the Upaniṣads. Nor is it necessary for our limited purposes here. Prof. Ranade's *Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy* deals with this matter adequately. Here we shall indicate the subjects dealt with in the Upaniṣads and point out the main emphasis.

The Upaniṣads are not regular philosophical treatises nor have they been composed or written at one time by one man with a view to a logical presentation of things. An attempt to co-ordinate these inspired talks by various sages was made later. That is why we sometimes see inquiries stopping half-way as well as replies which seem to be inconsistent with others. It is better for lay readers like us to read each Upaniṣad by itself and to make the best of it rather than to try to read some readymade philosophy in each of them. The philosophy in the Upaniṣads should be allowed to shape itself in our minds as we go along reading, studying, and meditating. That seems to me to be the best way of studying the Upaniṣads.

The Upaniṣads deal mainly with philosophy in the highest sense of the term and with spiritual life. They touch a variety of cognate subjects as well, but they are never busy with them. We find therein stray thoughts (sometimes couched in crude imagery) on cosmology, metaphysics, psychology, sacrifices, life after death, rebirth, and ethics. But the main emphasis is on spiritual knowledge and spiritual life that would take one beyond birth and death to immortal bliss. All other things are quite subordinate and they appear to pale into insignificance in the eyes of the seers of the Upaniṣads. They lay the highest emphasis on truth as the basis of all ethical life. According to them *Satya* or truth knows no defeat. They condemn the five great sins called *pancamahā pātakas*. They ridicule pride and vanity and uphold humility. It would help us a great deal to understand the teaching of the Upaniṣads if we keep in mind a few things noted below.

The Upaniṣads are completely preoccupied with the emancipation of the individual soul from the bondage of ignorance and limitation. They deal mainly with the attainment of real knowledge leading to infinite joy. Everything else is woven round this great objective. The rishis give us a call, away from 'a life of the senses' or '*preya*' to 'a life of the spirit' or '*śreya*.' They do not ask us either to suppress or neglect the senses altogether. They want us to rise above them by non-attachment rather than by ascetic abandonment. They want us to rely on intuition and mystic apprehension rather than on intellectual knowledge and logic. They are definite that the intellect by itself is incapable of cognizing the spirit beyond. They speak from experience of a living consciousness of the oneness of the all-prevading spirit. The *sādhana* or the spiritual discipline or *brahmacarya* that they have

proposed is in consonance with the basic idea that they propagate. Purification of the mind and body by clean and light food, self-control, non-attachment, active practice of all the virtues, yoga or concentration and meditation on the Supreme Being culminating in complete surrender to Brahman during life and final absorption at death—this is the path that the Upaniṣads propose to the seeker after truth.

This in brief is the ever-running mighty current of thought which is obvious everywhere in the Upaniṣads. Now let me say a few words about some important ideas in the Upaniṣads such as *karma, jñāna,* rebirth, etc.

Infinite power and potentiality which can neither be called conscient or unconscient is the basic being according to the Upaniṣads. It has infinite will. It may be said to be non-conscient because it is one and alone and unless there is 'another' or unless there are two, how can there be any consciousness at all? By its own will, it creates matter and energy and thus makes the way for the multitudinous universe. Then only, that is when there is creation, there is the birth of what may be called consciousness. Matter and energy are not something that exist by themselves. They are mere forms of the primal spirit. All else is name and form. Our feeling of separation, limitation, isolation, our absorption in the life of the senses, our attachment to matter and to the objects of our senses, our egocentric consciousness are all born of our ignorance which binds us down to earth and keeps us away from unitary life and from the realization of oneness of the spirit. Cursed is he who sees "many and different" in this world, say the rishis.

The spirit or Ātman, which is the cause of creation, which pervades everything in the universe, which is immanent like ether, which is beyond time, space, and

causation, is one and indivisible. That alone is worthy of worship. That alone is God, the supreme *Puruṣa* or Supreme Personality. All other gods that are worshipped are mere embodiments of different forces, physical or psychological. The one God is the one Spirit. There should be no mistake about it. That which is beyond the senses and that which cannot be known even by the mind, that is Brahman and not what people worship as so many gods, says Kenopaniṣad.

The Upaniṣads believe in the continuity of life after the death of the physical body. They do not put forth any arguments for that belief. When Naciketa puts his question to Yama as to whether the soul lives after death, Yama says that even the gods do not know the mystery. But still he asserts that the soul does live on. It does not only live on but it is reborn in this world in various wombs according to previous *karma* or action. In the *Aitareya,* however, there is a curious reference to second birth where the rishi says that the birth of a son to a man is itself his rebirth. He is reborn, as it were, as his own son! But this cannot be said to exclude the idea of actual rebirth after one's own death as in so many other places that idea has been accepted almost without question.

Thus though rebirth is taken for granted as one form of continuity of the life of the soul after the cessation of the body, the Upaniṣads also state some definite ideas about the destinies of a soul. They make a clear distinction between heavenly life and immortality. Heavenly life is but a sojourn to the world of enjoyment which is necessarily temporary like a journey in a first class saloon. No one can live in heaven permanently. One lives there according to the measure of accumulated merit one has stored while in this world. As soon as that is exhausted

he is bound to come down to the earth in one form or the other. Thus heavenly life is only a reward for the time being. But immortality is a permanent thing which is beyond the cycle of birth and death. The soul that is saved has no return either to this world or to heaven. He is attuned with the immortal spirit itself. The Upaniṣads naturally emphasize immortal life rather than heavenly life. Immortality alone is worth coveting and worth trying for. They despise the heavens and heavenly enjoyments as being below the mark, and think that they are not worth the trouble.

They say that after the death of the physical body, souls have three alternate destinies in accordance with the soul's achievements and attitude during life. If a particular soul has lived an ordinary animal life and has neither cared for religion nor acquired merit by the practice of virtue, it is bound to be reborn in this world either as man or some animal or as some despicable creature according to the life it has lived. It cannot go to heaven and it is far far away from immortality. If, however, a particular soul has done good deeds and has led a virtuous and a religious life, it will go to heaven and enjoy there in proportion to the good it has done. After the exhaustion of that 'bank-balance', it will again re-enter the world as a person with some opportunities. If, however, a particular soul has led a life of *brahmacarya*, a life of spiritual discipline, if it has led a life of the spirit and not of the senses, if it has acted without any attachment whatsoever, it will be neither reborn on earth nor will it go to heaven but it will attain immortality. Such souls alone attain eternal peace, declare the Upaniṣads.

Just as the Upaniṣads draw a clear line between heaven and immortality they distinguish also between *karma* or action and *jñāna* or knowledge. They say that *karma* is

by its very nature binding because all actions must have and do have reactions which are equal and opposite. Therefore, they say that as a general rule, a life of action can never make for immortality and that knowledge alone can lead to that status. Good actions may lead us to the heavens. But however good the actions, they are incapable of relieving us from the cycle of birth and death and of giving us immortality. But at the same time they knew that action was inevitable. Whether conscious or unconscious, willing or unwilling, we are in the whirl of action and are bound to act this way or that. Our very inaction is a kind of action! In fact life means action and even death means action. All creation is but the infinite conjugation of the verb "to do". But here too the seers have found out a way which is later made clearer by the *Bhagawad Gītā*. That way is the way of non-attachment to the fruit of our actions. If we act without desire for the fruit, without attachment, then action will not, nay cannot bind us. We neutralize the reactions as by a spring and become unattached witnesses to the whole play of action and reaction. Therefore the Upaniṣads say, "He who is learned in the Vedas and he who is not cursed or fettered by personal desires of any kind becomes the master of eternal joy."

Now let us understand what the Upaniṣads mean by *jñāna* or knowledge. They mean spiritual knowledge, knowledge which is lived. They do not mean intellectual knowledge, for instance, of the flora and fauna of a country or of the world. Again mere conceptual knowledge of the spirit is not of much use. It is intuitional knowledge, knowledge by identity and knowledge by experience, that they value. Intellect is but a part of our being and not a very predominant part either. Therefore intellectual knowledge is but just a brain-wave, a movement

in the grey matter and nothing more. Thus to know that the world is but a form of the spirit or to know that the world is the abode of God by our intellect is not valued by the Upaniṣads. That is why they say that the truth of truths cannot be known by our *medha* or intellect. What then is the type of knowledge that the Upaniṣads indicate? They say that real knowledge consists of intellectual conviction, emotional feeling and attunement of our physical body to act in accordance with such knowledge. All these together is real knowledge. If then we really experience the oneness of the spirit every moment of our lives and live accordingly we can be said to have that knowledge. Thought, word and deed can be attuned to each other and can be consistent only when there is real knowledge. That is why the Upaniṣads say, "He who sees that all is Ātman, to him where is sorrow and where is delusion?"

Finally we must understand what the Upaniṣads mean by *Yoga* or *Yogavidhi* or *Sādhana*, that is spiritual discipline for enlightenment. Round about us is the infinite immanent spirit. Here cooped up in a tiny body is a spark of consciousness with a narrow compass of egocentric activities. The Upaniṣads say that the narrow yet charmed circle can be broken effectively by *Yoga* or concentration on Brahman and the soul thus freed from bondage can merge into the infinite sea of consciousness. Ordinarily the powers of our mind are occupied with the senses and their objects. We are strongly attached to them; we see nothing beyond. But the Upaniṣads say, "Leave the path of *preya* and take to that of *śreya*." Withdraw your powers from the external sense-objects and apply them to the soul to realize the spirit within, the *pratyagātman*. This is the pivotal point of *Yoga*. As we go on practising this introspection with a view to finding out the ultimate

truth, we are bound to visualize it one day as it is already there, though now obscure to us. This *Yoga*, however, is not so easy. It means full self-control and self-control requires discipline of a severe type. We have practically to remodel our lives if we want to be *Yogis*. Still this is the path, the only path. The Upaniṣads say, "Narrow is the path and sharp like the edge of a razor." This path leads to Brahman or to the Ātman, to eternal bliss.

Now a word about the place of the Upaniṣads in Indian philosophy. To think of Indian philosophy without the Upaniṣads is to think of the Bible without the Sermon on the Mount. No doubt the Vedas themselves are unique in more senses than one. But still more unique are those parts of the Vedas which are termed the Upaniṣads. In fact, Indian philosophy is identified with the Upaniṣads. Portions of the Vedas other than the Upaniṣads deal with *karmakāṇḍa* or ritualism. Rituals always change with the times as they are after all but forms, and forms change while the spirit persists. The Upaniṣads deal with the spirit and with the knowledge of the spirit. Hence their importance as well as their comparative freshness. While the path of rituals has practically fallen into disuse the path of knowledge is as young as ever. It is assuming greater importance and gaining greater popularity as it gets more widely known.

For one thing, the Upaniṣads are the most ancient books on Indian philosophy and one who wants to study it has to go to them. They are the sources of Indian philosophy. They contain in fact the seeds of many later philosophies such as the Sāṁkhya, Yoga, etc. Those schools developed later into separate systems but they owe their origin undoubtedly to the Upaniṣads. It is interesting to note that most of the later *darśanas* or philosophies can be easily traced to the Upaniṣads. One who

is particularly interested in this aspect of the Upaniṣads may do well to read Prof. R. D. Ranade's book on the Upaniṣads.

The next important thing is that the Upaniṣads have been recognized since long as the basic authorities on Indian philosophy. The Upaniṣads have the first place in what is called the *prasthāna trayi* or the triad of authoritative books. The other two are the *Brahmasūtras* and the *Bhagawad Gītā*. But of these two the former is an aphoristic summation of and a commentary on Upaniṣadic philosophy and the latter is likened to the milk drawn from cows, where the cows are the Upaniṣads. This again proves the importance of the Upaniṣads since even in the recognized triad of books the merit of originality *par excellence* belongs to the Upaniṣads and not to the other books. Today on account of the traditions established by the three Ācāryas no one can claim to be an Ācārya of Indian philosophy unless he writes about the Upaniṣads and says something which is original.

The Upaniṣads have so permeated Indian philosophy that it is interesting to note the various expressions or phrases from the Upaniṣads which have become current coin. Some of the *Mahāvākyas* or great sentences in the Upaniṣads such as, "All this verily is Brahman" (*"Sarvam khalvidam Brahma"*), "Brahman is truth, knowledge, and infinity" (*"Satyam jñānam anantam Brahma"*), "That thou art" (*"tat twam asi"*), are all woven into the very fabric of Indian philosophy and we all think in terms of those sentences and phrases. In the same way some of the imagery of the Upaniṣads is to be found almost universally used in Indian philosophical literature. "The body is the chariot, the soul the charioteer, the senses the horses," is an example. Similarly, "The lotus in the midst of water but untouched by it," "the waters of the many

rivers flowing into the ocean and losing their identity," and such other numerous examples can be given. It is evident therefore that the Upaniṣads do not merely claim priority in time but also priority in importance. As long as there is hunger in the human heart for inner harmony and peace, for unity and concord, for light and illumination, for immortality and infinite bliss, the Upaniṣads will live. The prayer of the ancient seers, "Oh! God, lead us from death to immortality, from untruth to truth, from darkness to light", will echo and re-echo from the four corners of the world.

The Upaniṣads are not only the best examples of good philosophy, but also of good literature, though they never claim to be literary compositions. Some passages in *Muṇḍaka, Kaṭha, Taittirīya, Chāndogya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* are classical in their purity. The beauty and music of the portions in which Yama holds out temptations to Naciketa, where Yama describes the body as chariot, where the guru gives the parting message to his disciples, where Yājñavalkya addresses Maitreyī in terms of endearment are noteworthy from the literary point of view. Even a few such passages in philosophical writings add to their charm and value. Some parts of the Upaniṣads are naturally archaic and abstruse. But on the whole, we need not be discouraged in taking up a study of the Upaniṣads in the original so long as we have such passages as noted above. They repay all the trouble and give us real literary pleasure. Some later writers have bodily lifted some of the beautiful expressions in the Upaniṣads and have incorporated them into their own writings. The *Gītā*, for instance, which is itself one of the greatest books in the world, thought it fit to use some of the sentences in the Upaniṣads which are undoubtedly of great literary merit.

We may also refer briefly to what has been said against the Upaniṣads by some writers. If there have been scores of eminent men who have appreciated the Upaniṣads and their philosophy there have been some who have deprecated them and their teaching. It is not my purpose here to go into all the charges. But it is necessary to refute one or two serious charges against the Upaniṣads. It is sometimes said that the teaching of the Upaniṣads is other-worldly, negative, and pessimistic. It is also said that there is not much philosophy in them and that they are full of mystical musings.

Both these charges are mere half-truths and on analysis we find that they have very little basis. Before I say anything about the charges let me first draw the attention of the readers to the circumstances and the times in which the Upaniṣads were written. There had been a surfeit of ritualistic activity. People had begun to feel that it led nowhere. They had become sceptical about sacrifices. They were hungering for soul-satisfaction. The outer world however rich and prosperous had failed to give real peace and inner tranquillity to the human soul. At such a time the Upaniṣads came into being and declared that it is not by bread alone that man lives. It is not wealth only that can satisfy a man. It is *parāvidyā*, spiritual knowledge, alone which can give peace to man. That was the message of the Upaniṣads.

So the Upaniṣads sought to swing the human mind from heavy ritual and sacrifices to deep meditation, from the lusty senses to the disciplined soul, from material wealth to spiritual peace, from the external world to the internal consciousness, from objective reality to subjective truth. In doing so they have naturally laid more emphasis on the life of the spirit. This is the other-worldliness of the Upaniṣads. But the question is whether they have preached

other-worldliness to the extent of crippling our daily life by condemning it as an evil to be shunned. They have never done so. Not only that. They have on right occasions laid the right emphasis even on the life of the senses. "Who is the greatest among the knowers of Brahman?" To this question the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* answers, "One who plays with the spirit, one who is absorbed and deeply interested in it, and at the same time one who is full of activity." Another Upaniṣad says, "A man ought to desire to live for a full hundred years doing action." Take the invocatory verse in the *Kena*. What does it say? "Let us protect each other, let us enjoy together, let us do heroic deeds in unison and let our studies be taught us by a brilliant guru." The invocatory verse in the *Muṇḍaka* says, "Let us fully enjoy and live our allotted days with firm limbs and strong body." This certainly is not other-worldliness. Nor is there anything pessimistic about any one of these passages.

How can these rishis who are trying to attain nothing less than eternal bliss, to seek the joy of Brahman and to make it their own be called pessimistic? They do not despise the world of the senses, but they clearly see that the world of spirit is superior and more abiding. By what stretch of imagination can Naciketa who rejects the dancing girls and insists upon getting spiritual knowledge be called pessimistic? Who can call Maitreyī pessimistic? Diseased or prejudiced must be the mind that stigmatizes as pessimistic the Upaniṣads which glorify these two great figures.

Equally unjustifiable is the charge of negativism. No doubt many a time the rishis do not find words to describe the supreme reality that is present to their inner eye. Therefore, they sometimes call it *asat* or non-existence. Sometimes they describe it as "not this, not this", "*neti*,

neti." They only mean that they cannot describe in terms of the things present to their senses, the things that cannot be sensed or reasoned about. That is why they say, the mind cannot reach the reality and so on. But the Upaniṣads have not stopped there. They have not described reality only in negative terms. They have a hundred brilliant positive epithets as well. They say it is truth, it is of the nature of knowledge, it is infinite. They say it is peaceful, it is auspicious, it is beautiful. It is also described as being full of ecstatic joy, brilliant, pure, sinless, self-born, all-pervasive one and indivisible. This is not a negative description of the reality in any sense of the term.

Regarding the next charge of want of philosophy in the Upaniṣads they have never claimed to be a systematically worked-out philosophical system. They are a rich mine of mystic experience and they contain glimpses into the deep truths of the spiritual world. This, however, is a qualification rather than a drawback. After all, philosophy is but a logical working out of some axiomatic premises. But who is to supply the premises? Are they to be taken *a priori* and worked out or are they to have some basis in human experience? If they must have a basis in human experience, then mystic experience and intuitional insight alone can serve us in this field. Philosophy must stand also the test of spiritual experience if it is to abide. Dr. Radhakrishnan has clearly pointed out the great value of mystic experience to philosophy in his *Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*. In the light of what he says the position of the Upaniṣads is unassailable.

With this brief introduction, I launch this small book into the world. Let it help us in our journey from darkness to light.

2. NACIKETA THE SEEKER

[Yama is the Lord of the underworld. It is his duty to see that people are rightly punished. He sits in judgement on the actions of all living beings. A young seeker after truth dares go to this God of Death for knowing the truth about the nature of the human soul and its destiny. By persistent questioning and by a simple naivete, all his own, he persuades Yama to part with the mystic knowledge about the soul and the Supreme Spirit. What is more, he elicits from Yama the full course of the pathway to the realization of the great truth. It is this pathway that later developed into the more scientific Yoga school of Patañjali. This story describes the adventure of young Naciketa.]

"To the god of death do I give you away," said the angry father Vājaśravas to the youthful Naciketa when he insisted upon his being gifted away during a sacrifice.

Vājaśravas was a very ambitious householder and he thought of performing some sacrifice which would bring him name and fame. Of the many sacrifices that were current in those days, *Viśwajit* (that which conquers the world) was one. The price that the performer of this sacrifice had to pay was very heavy. He was expected to give away all his property.

Vājaśravas decided upon performing this sacrifice rather than any other and gave away

all his property to the Brāhmins. But poor man, he had not much of it and many a lean and barren and limbless cow also formed part of his scanty belongings.

His young son, who was but a stripling, observed all this and was convinced that his father's ambition had overshot the mark. But he had great faith in himself and he believed that by offering himself up he would be rescuing his father from a calumny and from the joyless world that would otherwise be his lot. So he went to his father and placed himself at his disposal as if he too was part of his property.

"Dear father, to whom, to what god would you give me in this great sacrifice that you are performing?" *said the son in simple faith.*

His father did not heed the request. He was not in a mood to treat his son as chattel. He was preoccupied with other details of the sacrifice. But his son Naciketa was persistent. He repeated his question. Still the father cared not. Then he repeated the question for the third time. The father was angry at the impertinence of his child and said in a huff, "Go thou, to the God of Death do I give thee away. Pester me not any further."

Young Naciketa wondered at this strange reply from his father. He knew that his father had blurted out in this manner in a fit of temper.

He felt that he himself was not in the wrong, and yet his father had chosen to be angry. He was conscious that he was not below the mark compared to other boys, but he wondered as to how he would be useful to Yama, if he went to him. He consoled himself saying that like the grain does a man ripen and like the grain does he fall to the ground and then again is he reborn. So may it happen with himself if he went to Yama, thought he.

True to his word and true to the angry command of his father, Naciketa went to the Lord of Death. Yama was absent from his home which was at the gate of the worlds. He waited at Yama's door for three long days without food. When Yama returned he was surprised to see a young Brāhmin fasting on his doorsteps. He knew that a fasting Brāhmin at his door boded no good to himself, the owner of the house. So he immediately ordered for water and other usual offerings for his guest. He invited Naciketa to a seat near him and requested him to ask for three boons, one for each of the three days of the fast.

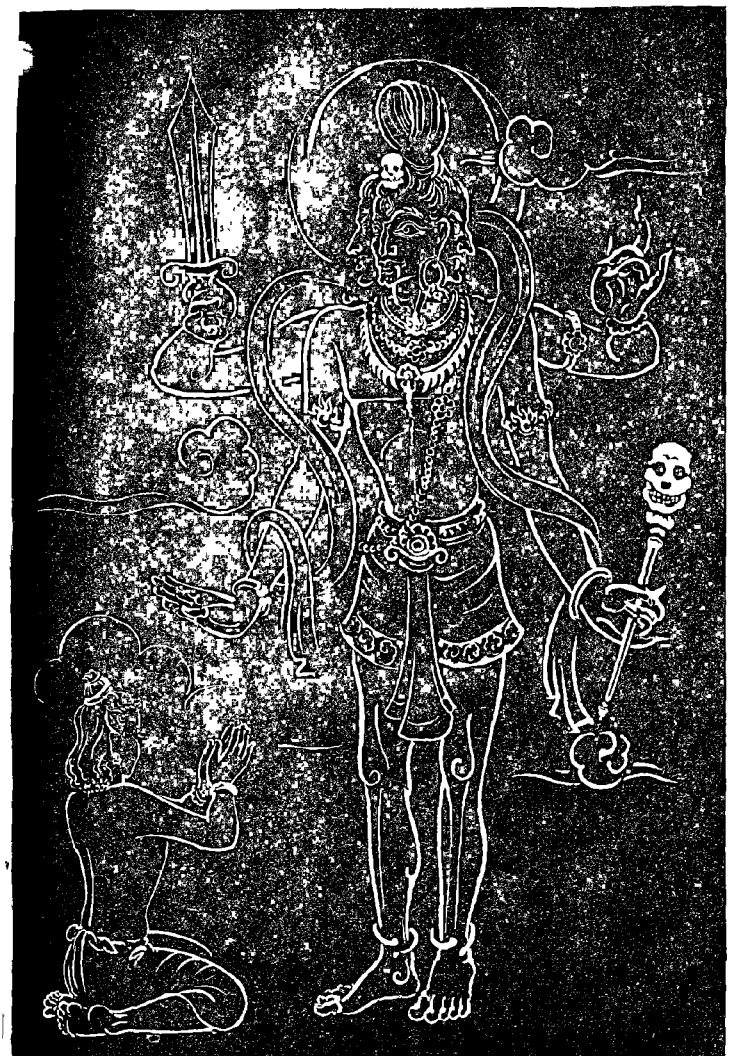
His own father's pacification was Naciketa's first consideration. So he said to the Lord of Death, "Grateful beyond measure am I, great god, for the boons that you have offered. Let my father feel like one whose will is done. Let

him be of good cheer and let his anger be pacified. Let him welcome me as before when I return from you. Let this be the first of the boons."

Lord Yama immediately said, "This will happen. Your father will be pleased to see you returning from the very jaws of death. He will sleep in peace having overcome all anger."

While asking for the second boon Naciketa said, "I learn that there is no fear in heaven. Nor are you, who destroy life, to be found there. Nor does old age afflict people in that happy place. Free from the pangs of hunger and thirst and being above sorrow people enjoy life there without any let or hindrance. I am full of faith and I deserve to know that world. Therefore, O Yama, give me that knowledge. This I ask of you as the second boon."

Yama was very much pleased with Naciketa's question. He gave him the full knowledge of a certain sacrifice. He taught him how to perform that sacrifice correctly and told him that one who performs that sacrifice would go to heaven and enjoy life there. He further told him that that particular *yajña* or sacrifice would from then onwards be known in the world by Naciketa's name. The fire used in that sacrifice would also be named after him. After imparting this knowledge to him, Yama



NAṆIKETA AND YAMA

called upon him to ask for the third and last boon.

"When man dies, some say he lives after death, while others say he does not. This is yet a matter which is undecided and which is much discussed. I would like to learn definitely from you the truth about the matter. This is the third boon I ask for," said Naciketa naively.

Yama was not a little disconcerted at this great question from the young questioner. He tried to dissuade Naciketa from asking for knowledge so difficult. But he failed to do so. On the other hand he whetted Naciketa's curiosity the more by withholding a ready reply.

"Young seeker, why not choose some other boon? Even the gods have not come to a decision on this point. Nor is it easy to understand this subject. It is too subtle a matter. Please relieve me of the burden of answering this difficult question. Why press me hard?" pleaded Yamarāj.

Naciketa insisted, "Rightly said, Lord Yama. If what you say is true, who else is there so competent as you to solve this problem? You deal in life and death and none can know the destiny of the human soul so well as you. Nor do I see any other boon as good as this."

Yama tried again to tempt him out of the great question by offering other gifts, but the young man persisted.

"Ask for sons and grandsons that would live the full span of hundred years. Ask for numerous cattle, elephants, horses and gold. Ask for ample land and you may even ask for life that may last as long as you desire. You may ask for any other boon which you deem equal to this. You may rule this wide world as long as you desire and I shall give you the power to enjoy all possible pleasures on earth. You are free to ask me frankly for the fulfilment of all desires that are difficult of fulfilment in the world of mortals. These beautiful damsels with chariots and musical instruments going about here are hardly ever seen by men. But at my behest, they will all attend on you and serve you. But do not, for god's sake, ask me anything about life after death," said Yama.

This offer was a fresh temptation in the way of Naciketa. But he was firm of mind. He therefore brushed aside this temptation and said, "You destroyer of all things, are not all these that you mentioned but temporary and ephemeral things, living but for a day? Do they not corrupt and enfeeble the senses? This life after all is but a brief one and therefore I shall have none of these things that you so

generously offer. These chariots and these dancing girls, I leave to you. Not by wealth or pleasure alone is the human soul satisfied. And after all, we would get this wealth when we have once seen you and we would live on as long as you choose and as long as you rule. I do not wish to concern myself with all those things. It is that knowledge alone that is worth begging from you. What fool of a man would indulge in mere dance and song and wish to live long merely like an animal when once he has known the true nature of life and when once he has come in touch with you who never become old and who are immortal! Therefore, O Yamarāj, tell me about that life after death about which even the gods are still in doubt. I shall not choose any boon other than this—the solution of this mystery of mysteries."

When Yama found that his disciple was staking everything on this question, he became helpless. Yet he was pleased. He saw that young Naciketa deserved to know the highest truth. He had faith, sincerity, purity, simplicity of mind, tenacity of purpose, freedom from temptations and above all an intense desire to know the truth and realize it in his own life.

Yama said, "Dear and wise child, two paths always lie open before a man, the path of *śreya* or of good deeds, and the path of *preya* or of

pleasure. He who follows the former achieves the goal while he who follows the latter perishes. The wise always choose the right path. You have spurned the path of pleasure and have chosen that which brings permanent good to you. Pleasures did not, could not tempt you. Ignorant fools who know not that there is the other world of immortal bliss, are caught again and again in my net. The wise, however, are few and they follow the other path. It is no doubt a subtle and difficult path. The knowledge of it is so rare. Rare also are those who inquire after it and it is only those who have realized it that can impart it to others. By intellect and logic alone this truth cannot be known. You have risen above every temptation and now you deserve to know the highest truth.

"The wise man attains this ancient knowledge of the immanence of the spirit that pervades all things by meditation on the inner self and he goes beyond joy and sorrow. The truth lies beyond the dualities of life like pleasure and pain, success and failure, beyond all relativity. The Vedas or the sacred books and the various penances aim at it. Great *sādhakas* (those who strive) try to attain it by the discipline of *brahmacarya*. The mystic symbol of that truth of truths is *AUM*.

"That Supreme Spirit is neither ever born nor does it ever die. It is the pure and the immaculate. It is unborn and immortal and dies not at the passing away of the body. One who is desireless and one who has gone beyond sorrow can have a vision of this truth through his purified senses and mind.

"This Spirit cannot be known by teaching nor can it be grasped by the intellect, nor can it be acquired by vast learning. It is by the grace of the Spirit alone that one can be blessed with its knowledge though all these do help the process.

"One who has not abstained from bad deeds and one whose mind is not calm and composed cannot hope to know the truth.

"The human body is like a chariot and the soul is the charioteer. The senses are the horses and the sense-objects are the roads along which they travel. The wise people who know the truth say that the soul is the enjoyer through the senses and the mind. An unrestrained mind without understanding cannot control the senses which would then be like uncontrolled horses. A restrained mind with good understanding can control the senses like a good charioteer who keeps his horses well in hand. An unrestrained mind cannot concentrate and cannot keep itself pure: cannot attain

the goal. One with an unrestrained mind would be caught up in the cycle of birth and death. One with a controlled mind will attain a place whence there is no return.

"Few and far are they who look into themselves and try to find out the Ātman or the Great Spirit. Since at the time of creation, the spirit went forth outward, the senses and the mind have a tendency to be engaged with the external world. He who looks into himself sees that the soul is the witness of both the dream-state and the waking-state. It is only through the power of the spirit that the senses can function. One who realizes this goes beyond all sorrows.

"It is the great Ātman from whom the sun and the moon and all things take their birth. In that Ātman do all find their final rest and fulfilment. This Ātman is everywhere, here as well as in the other worlds. He is one and indivisible. He who sees more than one here goes from death to death. One who realizes unitary life integrally is saved and he becomes immortal.

"That alone is the real Ātman who is awake in those who are sleeping, shaping things as he likes in dreams. That power resides in the pure consciousness which is Brahman and in that are all the worlds centred. Like fire that

assumes innumerable shapes and forms according to the objects that it burns, the one Ātman that is at the centre in the heart of all things appears different in different objects. The sun who is like the eye of the universe is not affected by the impurities of the universe. So too the inner Ātman stands unaffected by the sins and the sorrows of the world.

"He, the great Ātman, the arch-controller, is the inner essence of all beings. It is he who shapes the one into many. Those wise and brave men who see him and realize him in their souls—it is their joy that is eternal and not that of others.

"He is the eternal among the fleeting ones, he is the life in the living. He is the one who fulfils the desires of many and all. Those wise men who see him and realize him in their inner selves—it is their joy that is eternal and not that of others.

"As we observe things, we see first objects of our senses. But our senses are subtler than the objects as it is our senses that see the objects. But the primary elements are subtler than our senses since our senses are made of those primary elements. The mind is superior and subtler than the elements as it is the mind that perceives the elements. The power of understanding is superior to the mind as it has the

power of discrimination. The soul is greater and subtler than the power of understanding as this is but a part and a fraction of that Great Soul. But the unmanifest is greater and vaster than the Great Soul that manifests. But *Puruṣa*, the Supreme Spirit, is far greater than the manifest and the unmanifest, as it is the synthesis of both and contains both integrally. There is nothing subtler, greater or superior to that *Puruṣa* which is the final word in existence and being. That is the final goal of all.

"He pervades all beings secretly and is not manifestly seen. He can be perceived or felt only by subtler seers through their one-pointed power of understanding.

"There is a way by which we can approach that *Puruṣa*. The wise who want to have a vision of that great truth should merge the powers of speech, etc. in the mind, that mind in the power of understanding, that power again into the Great Soul, and that again into the infinitely peaceful Spirit.

"When the five senses and their power of perceiving along with the mind are stilled and when the power of understanding is held in suspense—that is the supreme condition of human consciousness. That is called the *Yoga* condition or perfect concentration. That is the steady stilling of the senses and holding

them there. Then the man is free from objective and fleeting ideas. Such a pure condition of consciousness cannot be realized by the power of speech or by the power of sight or by the mind. It can be realized only through faith and by intuition, purified by long practice and strict discipline. When all desires have fled from the mind and all doubts have been cleared, a man becomes immortal.

"That great immanence is speechless and touchless and formless and deathless. It can neither be tasted nor smelt. It has neither beginning nor end. It is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. It is the great truth, the greatest reality and one who knows this goes beyond death.

"Arise, awake, approach the worthy ones and learn to realize the truth. Narrow is the path and difficult to tread, sharp like the edge of a razor. But success is sure to those who dare and do."

This is the highest knowledge and the pathway to it, as taught by Yama to Naciketa, the ideal seeker after truth.

3. RAIKWA THE CART-DRIVER

[Here is a story from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad.* Raikwa of the cart can be likened to Diogenes of the tub, the Greek philosopher who warned off the king from standing between himself and the sun when the latter visited him. Both prized self-possession more than power and pelf. Their rich inner harmony and happiness in the midst of external penury were the envy of kings. Raikwa said that mere giving of charity without spiritual knowledge could not bring the blessing of real happiness. Knowledge of the Spirit which is the creator of all gods was necessary.]

In ancient times there was a king called Jānuśruti. He was ruling over a kingdom called Mahāvṛśa. He was known to be a good king, just and merciful to his subjects. He was particularly famous for his charities. He maintained numerous free feeding houses. He built many rest-houses along the royal road. His generosity was on the lips of all.

He often felt proud that he was able to achieve so much in his life-time. He thought that that was the best way to accumulate religious merit and to get peace of mind. He believed that he was the greatest patron and that there was none else like him. He used to measure his merit by the amount of charity he had distributed.

One evening after the day's work, he was resting on the terrace of his palace. As he lay there under the sky, right above him two white swans were speeding fast to their roost. As they were chattering and gossiping, the king overheard them.

The male bird said to its mate, "You blind bat! Do you not perceive the bright band of light that proceeds from the King Jānuśruti? Beware lest you cross the flaming light of his fame and get yourself burnt. You must know that today there is none so famous as he for abundant charities."

The female bird laughed. "Why do you thus threaten me, dear? We are wanderers of the skies. We know more of the world than others. After all, is this king's merit more than that of Raikwa, the cartman? The king is but mad after name and fame. It is these that drive him to action. With all his charities he is ever restless. He hankers after praise. Raikwa, sitting where he is, attracts to himself as it were, the merit of all around as a lake draws into itself the waters on the slopes. At peace with himself, he does what he ought to and what he can and thinks not of the morrow."

Thus saying, the birds flit past and the shadows of the night closed on the sleepy earth.

But the king who had listened to the conversation became very restless. Raikwa began to haunt him. "I must find out this man little known to fame but one who is at peace with himself and with the world," he said with determination. As he slept, he thought of some speedy way of finding Raikwa.

At dawn, the bards began to sing the usual songs of praise to rouse the king from his sleep. But that morning the king did not feel very happy over the customary eulogies. He became conscious that there were people greater than himself and that they deserved more than himself. The bards sang, "Rise ye, great king, the most generous and powerful one, giver of charities with a hundred hands, and patron of the seven worlds, rise, for now it is morning. Suppliants from the corners of the world await thy abundant gifts."

But he stopped them from repeating the words. He admonished the singers, saying, "Waste not those epithets on me. There is one greater than myself, perhaps a hundredfold greater. Go ye to the limits of my kingdom and find him out. I shall not feel happy till I have met that great soul."

The king's servants, not a little surprised at this command, set out to seek Raikwa, the strange cartman, described by the king as a

great soul. Some of his servants returned after a few days unable to find Raikwa. But the king was not satisfied and he asked them to seek him in a place where the knowers of Brahman, the possessors of spiritual knowledge, usually dwell. When the servants saw that the king would never be at ease till he had met the philosopher, they again went in search of him. They began to scour the villages of the kingdom of Mahāvṛśa. In one of the remote villages, a simple man, ostensibly a cart-driver, was shown to them. He was Raikwa.

With calmness writ large on his face and with infinite kindness in his eyes, there sat Raikwa under his cart near his small cottage. The servants wondered for a time. "What a fool is our king! He takes this bit of a man to be greater than himself! Certainly the king seems to have lost his head." Thus they muttered to themselves. But they were helpless. They went back straight to the king and reported the matter. However ignorant his servants, the king knew the real worth of the man who sat under the cart.

As is the wont while going to see a great saint or a great soul, the king took numerous gifts with him. His generosity was all the more lavish on this occasion. He took along with him six hundred well-fed milch cattle with

calves, gold coins, chariots with horses, and other lovely presents.

When the royal party arrived, Raikwa was at first surprised. But he divined the cause of the king's visit, and saw that the king had come to him in search of spiritual truth and inner peace.

The king made obeisance and stood with folded hands in a reverent mood. He requested Raikwa to accept his humble gifts and direct him as regards the god that he should worship in order to attain real happiness. The cartman-philosopher, however, was not much enamoured of the rich gifts. He did not readily welcome them. A little rebukingly he said to the king, "O royal friend, why do you waste these precious things on me? All these and a hundred kingdoms cannot buy spiritual knowledge. It is not something that can be bartered and bought in a market. These trinkets that you have brought are worth nothing to me."

The king felt a little hurt at this remark. But his respect for Raikwa increased a hundredfold, when he saw his nonchalant attitude towards all material possessions. Disappointed and helpless for the time being, the king returned to his capital. But he had already come under the spell of Raikwa. The more he stayed away from him the more he felt bereaved. He

used to hear numerous stories as to how many a person with a sore heart went to Raikwa and came back consoled and calmed. The king decided to make one more attempt to draw out the philosopher. Once again he went in an humble and suppliant mood to the saint of the cart. He approached him and begged of him knowledge as a favour.

Raikwa saw that the king was now ripe for a spiritual lesson and, therefore, welcomed him with warmth. The king then led Raikwa to his *shamiana* and treated him with the utmost respect. They had a long and intimate talk about matters of the mind and things of the spirit.

Raikwa said, "Various are the gods that people worship as the highest deity. The sweeping wind, the flaming fire, the breathing vital force are worshipped as god by many. But the spirit, itself uncreated, creates all and supports them. The spirit eats not anything, that is, it does not stand in need of anything, and is self-supporting and self-satisfied. All belongs to the spirit. All are but instruments carrying out its will.

"O king! have neither pride nor vanity for the charities that you dispense. Go thou, great king, to thy palace. Give but not with pride. Give generously but not with egotism. Give

freely but not with an eye to fame. Give but not as something that is yours, but as something given you by the spirit for giving to others.

"He who sees this truth becomes a seer and to him nothing is wanting and he becomes the enjoyer of things."

The king was extremely satisfied with these words of wisdom and experience that came from Raikwa.

While departing he gave a thousand milch cattle, numerous gold coins and chariots, and his own daughter in marriage to Raikwa. All these he did not reject this time.

Thenceforth, the village came to be known as Raikwaparṇa, after the philosopher of the cart.

4. GĀRGĪ THE FAIR QUESTIONER

[It is significant that ladies also took part some times in the debates and discussions that took place at the time of Vedic sacrifices. In one such debate Gārgī Vācaknavi ranged herself against the great patriarch Yājñavalkya. She had to acknowledge defeat. Ultimately Yājñavalkya proved equal to all who discussed with him and carried away the prize of a thousand cows from King Janaka.]

King Janaka of Videha performed a great sacrifice. He gave gifts to all very generously on that occasion. He loved to see important questions discussed in his presence. So he caused one thousand good cows to be collected in the yard with gold pieces tied to their horns. This was within sight of the grand assembly that had met there for the sacrifice.

Then he announced, "He who can defeat all others in debate can take away this coveted prize of a thousand cows."

This was a tempting prize no doubt. Hundreds of learned men who had assembled there began to look at one another. But when none had the daring to go forward and even touch the cows, Yājñavalkya the famous sage who was there in the assembly had the audacity to step forth and ask one of his disciples to march off with the cows!

Each one of the learned that were present there saw the prize slipping out of his grasp. But who could challenge the famous Yājñavalkya?

Aśwala, king Janaka's high-priest, got up in a rage and asked, "Answer me, O Yājñavalkya, how dare you assume that you are the foremost among all the seekers after knowledge and appropriate the prize to yourself? Do you know Brahman?"

The sage was, however, unmoved. He calmly replied, "No, good sir, I bow to him who is the knower of Brahman. But I am a poor Brāhmin and need the cows badly."

Aśwala was not silenced by the rebuff. He asked, "Then tell me, how does a householder conquer death?"

"By worshipping the god Agni, and through the support of Vani," replied Yājñavalkya. Aśwala persisted. He asked Yājñavalkya the details of sacrifices to various gods who bestow different boons. He questioned the sage about ceremonies and rituals, the verses to be recited and the rites to be observed. The sage answered all the queries, calmly and correctly. All of Aśwala's learning could not defeat the sage.

By now however a few more had gathered courage. Several learned Brāhmins came forward to ask various questions on the Vedas

and the sacrifices. One asked where king Parikṣit was. Yājñavalkya told him that he was in the heaven allotted to those who performed the *Aśwamedha* sacrifice. Another asked the sage what the Ātman was? The sage replied, "Ātman is not known by my telling you, nor by your learning from me. He is all-pervading, without beginning and without end. He is known only by the true seeker, through self-realization."

Thus was the debate waxing and waning and the sage calmly answering them all, when out stepped a fair Brāhmin girl to contest the prize. She was Gārgī Vācaknavi. She asked, "All known things are pervaded by elementary matter. Can you tell me, O sage, by what that elementary matter is pervaded?"

"By ether," replied Yājñavalkya. She asked, "By what is ether pervaded?"

"By Brahmaloka," replied the sage.

"Then by what is Brahmaloka pervaded?" she continued.

At this Yājñavalkya lost his temper.

"Do not ask silly questions for the sake of asking. Shut up or your head will fall from your shoulders." Gārgī retired abashed.

As the debate progressed she again gathered courage. The Brāhmins marvelled at the young woman who could thus challenge in contest

the well-known sage. But Gārgī had now questions worthy of the sage's learning:

"Here are two questions," she said, like the brave bowmen of Kāśi and Videha with arrows strung to their bows. "Tell me, if you can, O sage! what is it that is beyond the heavens and below the earth, yet between the heavens and earth too—that which is past, present and future?"

The learned Brāhmins held their breath. They were wondering what the reply could be. "By *Ākāśa*, by ether, the all-pervading, that is past, present and future," replied the sage. "And what is it that is finer than *Ākāśa*, that pervades the ether itself?" asked Gārgī. The men gathered were surprised at the persistence of the fair questioner. But Yājñavalkya calmly replied, "By the all-supreme Spirit, the creator and supporter of all things, the all-pervading, and the immanent without beginning and without end. This Spirit is the innermost reality in the heart of man beyond pain and old age." At this Gārgī admitted her defeat and addressing the assembly said, "None of us can win the debate against this great sage. He is the master of spiritual knowledge."

The debate should have rightly ended here. While the assembly acknowledged the mastery of the sage, they also admired the courage and learning of fair Gārgī.

But a few young men did come forward with petty questions, which Yājñavalkya answered and twitted the ambitious novices.

Lastly the sage said, "I shall be glad to answer more questions. I am here to reply to your satisfaction."

But he had already answered questions big and small and all were silent. He was the undisputed victor in the great debate.

5. BĀLĀKI THE VAIN

[It is the principle of intelligence that is the source of all things. This fact has been emphasized in this short story of Bālāki and Ajātaśatru. Bālāki was a vain and empty-headed young man and he was taught a lesson by the learned prince Ajātaśatru.]

A young man called Bālāki belonging to the family of Garga was full of vanity. He thought he knew everything. He was desirous of getting some money. So he went to Prince Ajātaśatru. The prince was quite courteous to him.

Bālāki offered to teach the prince the knowledge of Brahman. For this offer the prince gave him a thousand cows and said, "This is but a poor gift. I am not rich enough to give you as generously as Janaka does."

Bālāki was still more puffed up when he was in sight of such a rich gift. He said, "I shall tell you about Brahman, the highest reality."

But when he opened up his lips Ajātaśatru could see how shallow he was. Bālāki began to tell him that the person in the sun was Brahman or the highest reality. Ajātaśatru refused to accept this statement saying, "He is at the most the king of all beings but certainly not the highest reality."

Bālāki felt browbeaten but again said, "The person in the moon is the Brahman." The prince again told him that that was not so.

In this manner Bālāki went on proposing that the person in the lightning, in the sky, in the wind, etc. was Brahman. Each time the prince put Bālāki right by correcting his statement. Thus he rendered Bālāki speechless.

Finally Bālāki in desperation said, "The person that is in ourselves is the Brahman. One should worship him as such." The prince rejected this teaching also and said, "One who looks upon the person in himself as Brahman becomes self-regarding and nothing more. Therefore that is not Brahman at all."

At this Bālāki collapsed and said in humility, "I know things only so far. Now please teach me yourself the right knowledge. I am anxious to know the truth from you."

The prince was a Kṣatriya and Bālāki a Brāhmin by birth. The prince therefore said, "It is rather unusual that a Brāhmin should approach a Kṣatriya for spiritual knowledge. It is a reverse process. But that does not matter. I shall tell you what I know of it."

He then took Bālāki by the hand and led him to a man who was in deep sleep. He called upon the sleeping man by his name, "O Somarāja, get up please." But there was no response.

Then he patted the sleeping Somarāja by the hand and he awoke.

The prince then asked Bālāki, "Do you know where this sleeping man had gone during sleep? Who was it that had slept and who was active?" Bālāki was innocent of all this knowledge. He had no reply to give.

The prince then told him, "It was the intelligence in Somarāja that was sleeping or absent for the time being. His body was living and active and the vital powers were acting all the while. The intelligence (*vijñāna*) had withdrawn all his powers of consciousness from the various parts of the body and was taking rest in the empty space or vacuum (*ākāśa*) in the heart. At such a time all the powers are, as it were, withdrawn from active service and stand suspended. When that intelligence roams about in the dreamland, all these powers of hearing, seeing, etc. are with that intelligence. During dreams the intelligence assumes different roles—it may be of a king, or a Brāhmin or a hunter. But all these powers follow him just as the servants of a king follow him when he is out on tour.

"When the man is in deep sleep his intelligence is not cognizant of any outside thing nor of any dream. It withdraws at that time all its powers from the seventy-two thousand nerve

centres in the body and takes rest in a vacuum in the heart. He sleeps then like a great king or a noted Brāhmin or like a young boy free of all care and worry. He is then full of pure joy. When the man awakes, his intelligence returns and begins its activities as before.

"This principle of intelligence is really the Brahman. Verily like the gossamer web that spins out of a spider's body or like the sparks that spring and fly from fire, the innumerable things in the world, the vital powers, worlds, gods, all beings come out of this first principle which is Brahman or Ātman."

Humbled Bālāki listened with wrapt attention to this discourse on Brahman by Ajātaśatru and shed all his vanity and conceit.

6. SATYAKĀMA THE TRUTHFUL

[Here is a young man eager to take the vow of a *brahmacāri* and pursue the Reality. His only qualification is that he is truthful. That makes the guru or the preceptor accept the young stripling as his disciple. Thrown on his own resources in a forest, he communes with nature and arrives at the truth. He goes into the jungle as a common cowherd and comes back as a man of knowledge. The touch of perfection, however, has to be given by the guru. That is the story of Satyakāma Jābāla.]

"Dear mother, what is my *gotra* or lineage? I wish to go to a guru and offer to live with him as a *brahmacāri*," said young Satyakāma, one sweet morning to his mother.

He little knew how embarrassing that question was to her. However, she soon overcame her confusion. She knew that the claims of her child for knowledge were supreme. He was already grown up and to neglect those claims any further would be very culpable. She was well aware that the first thing that any guru would ask her child would be his *gotra* and parentage.

"Young child," she said, "to tell you the truth, I know not your *gotra*. While young and wandering as a housemaid serving here and

there, I begot you. How then can I know? But I am certain of one thing and that is that your name is Satyakāma and mine Jābāla. Therefore go forth and tell your guru that you are Satyakāma Jābāla."

The son agreed and took leave of the mother. He went in search of a teacher who would teach him what he wanted to know.

He approached Hāridrumata Gautama known for his wisdom. After a reverent bow Satyakāma informed him of his intention to learn at his feet.

As expected, the first question the guru asked was about his *gotra*.

"What *gotra*, young kid?"

Satyakāma said, "Sir, as I started on this journey of mine, I asked this question of my mother." So saying he reported the whole conversation that had taken place between himself and his mother. He finally added, "Thus, here I am, sir, known as Satyakāma Jābāla."

"Oh brave and truthful child!" exclaimed the would-be guru. "No one not born of a Brāhmin would dare tell such an unpleasant truth. Go therefore and bring *samidhā* or sacrificial fuel and I shall initiate you into *brahmacarya*. You have not departed from the truth, but clung fast to it, happen what may."

After this conversation, there was the usual ceremony of initiation and Satyakāma was enrolled as a regular inmate of the *āśrama*. The guru seemed to be a very hard task-master. One day he summoned Satyakāma and put him in charge of four hundred lean, weak, and poorly-fed cows. He told the young disciple to take the whole lot to the forest and asked him not to return till they had become a herd of a thousand! It was one of the duties of a disciple to serve the guru in the way that would best please him. So out went Satyakāma as a cowherd, with his new charge and with a determination to carry out the guru's orders.

He lived in the forest, looking after the cows and bulls. But his heart did not give up the yearning after truth, and even in the forest he made many friends all of whom had something to teach him; the friendly cows and bulls, the whispering trees and leaves, the singing birds and the bubbling brooks, the sun, the moon and the stars.

Gazing from morn to night at the four quarters of the globe in the peace of the forest meadows he felt that all this must be part of a great reality. The friendly leader of the herd, an aged bull, whispered to him, "Yes, all these four corners of the earth are one aspect of Brahman."

SATYAKĀMA THE TRUTHFUL

At night, when the herd slept, as he lit his camp-fire and the flame danced, it talked to him. The stars and the moon in the vast dome overhead became his friends. They too told him that light and darkness, the solid earth beneath and the domed space above studded with stars were all part of Brahman.

The morning sun kissing the dew-washed flowers, the midday sun drawing the sap from trees and plants, the evening clouds and rainbows reflecting the glory of the setting sun told him that the eye that sees all things, the life that dances in all things, the mind that wonders at beauty and asks endless questions, these too are part of Brahman. He heard of Brahman in the songs of the birds, felt the great presence in the cycle of seasons, and in the birth, the growth and decay of life around him. His mind slowly realized Brahman in touch, hearing, speech, sight and taste, in the beating of the heart, in waking and in dreams.

Then one day the leader of the herd came and told him, "We number over a thousand now. Take us to the *āśrama*."

By stages, the party reached the *āśrama*. He went to the teacher and bowed to him respectfully. The teacher was extremely glad to see his dutiful disciple after that long span of time. He looked up and he had a pleasant surprise

when he gazed at the brilliant face of young Satyakāma.

"Dear young man, you look like one who has known Brahman. Who was it that taught you? How is it that some agency other than the human has taught you this knowledge? For no one was with you in that wilderness except those dumb cattle and the dreary tumult of the forest," said the teacher.

The young disciple said with utter humility, "It is you, sir, from whom I expect to learn yet fully of the much-coveted knowledge. I have heard that from teachers like you alone can real knowledge be had. So I beseech you to favour me by completing the knowledge that I might have had by your grace through communion with nature." The guru knew that the disciple was ripe and ready for receiving spiritual knowledge.

Satyakāma stayed for some time more in the *āśrama*. He had already learnt much. His guru gave the final touches with his voice of experience. Thus Satyakāma succeeded in realizing his dream of acquiring full knowledge of Brahman the ultimate reality.

7. UMĀ THE GOLDEN GODDESS

[At whose desire does the mind function, who puts first the vital force into motion? This has been an eternal question. "The Brahman or the Transcendental Spirit," answers the rishi, the seer of the *Kenopaniṣad*. It is neither seen by the eye nor heard by the ear. Nor does the mind know it. The Spirit, on the other hand, is the seer of the eye, the hearer of the ear, and the knower of the mind. It is through the power of this all-pervasive Spirit that everything else functions. It is beyond the reach of the senses and can only be felt like a mighty presence through intuition. It is that Spirit which is the real God and not the many gods that people worship.

This is the teaching of the *Kenopaniṣad* and has been embodied in the allegory of Umā, the goddess of spiritual wisdom.]

It was the question hour. One evening while the sun hung in the west and shadow chased shadow in a race to envelope the world with darkness, a rishi was sitting under a tree in his *āśrama* with a group of young disciples around him. Everything there was simple and chaste as behoved the dwelling of the saint, known for his life of contemplation and good work. The evening prayers were just over and the youths came out with their questions.

Man is by nature inquisitive. He is never satisfied by that which is apparent to him. He wants to probe into the unknown and the beyond. Is this all? Is there nothing behind the visible body and the invisible mind? Thus the questioning mind goes on and on digging deeper into the realm of consciousness till curtain after curtain lifts and he has a vision of the ultimate reality or Brahman.

"At whose behest does the mind run towards its objects? Who bids first the vital powers to act? And at whose desire does the eye, the ear, and the power of speech function?"

This was a pretty formidable array of questions. The rishi of the *Kenopaniṣad* said calmly, "The power that inspires all these is one and indivisible. It is behind and beyond all that functions visibly. It hears the ear, sees the eye, and knows the mind. Neither our senses nor the mind fully grasps the Reality. They all move and act through the power that pervades all existence. That fountain-head of all energy is the real God and what people worship as so many gods are but mere reflections. He who knows and realizes this truth enjoys immortality. Here and now in this life is the opportunity to know this great truth, otherwise a great chance is lost for ever."

"Who then is so fortunate as to realize this truth that you speak of and extol? And how to know that one is in possession of this truth of truths?" was the next query.

"Well spoken," said the rishi. "Not he who says 'I know' knows it. He knows little. But the humble seeker who begins by saying 'I know not' knows the truth in course of time. It gradually illumines his mind like the rising sun. When once realized, the spirit is ever-present to him through all the states of his consciousness. His soul grows from strength to strength and his realization of the immaculate presence blesses him with immortal life."

The sage then looked at the faces of some of his disciples and could see that they had not grasped the full significance of what he said. So he narrated an allegory to illustrate his teaching that evening.

"My young friends," he began, "you have heard of the conflict between the gods and the demons. Once upon a time the gods won in a certain battle. It was through the good offices of Brahman. But due to ignorance they appropriated the credit to themselves, and became proud and elated. They thought, 'Verily this victory is ours and this glory too.'

"Brahma came to know of this. He thought of teaching them a lesson and of making them

realize their limitations. When they were in the midst of their rejoicings, he suddenly appeared in their presence. But how could they know him, blinded as they were by egoism and by empty vanity? They saw that some wonderful being was before them but they could not recognize it. Then they thought seriously of knowing it by some means. They deputed Agni, the lord of Fire, also known as the omniscient one, to investigate into the matter.

"Agni approached the strange being. Brahma queried 'Who art thou?' 'Why, I am the famous Agni, otherwise known as the all-knowing one.'

"'If such is your name and fame, may I know what power you possess?'

"'Well, I can burn all that is on the face of this earth and in the sky and everything that is in the seven worlds.'

"Brahma put before him a dry blade of grass and said, 'Bravo, mighty one, burn this blade and oblige.'

"Agni tried with all his might to burn it up. But he could not even singe it! He felt ashamed and went back to the gods and confessed his inability to know as to who the strange being was.

"Vāyu, the wind-god, was next requested to go and find out who it was that had defied the

attempts of Agni. Vāyu went with great confidence and thought that he would succeed.

"When he approached Brahma, he was asked, 'Who art thou?'

"'I am well known as the god of winds. I am also known as the god that sweeps through the vast skies!'

"'What power characterizes you?' was the next question by Brahma.

"'I can take away all that fills the earth by a mighty sweep,' said Vāyu.

"'Here you are.' So saying Brahma laid before him a piece of straw and asked him to blow it off.

"Vāyu tried his best but could not move it by a hair's breadth. He too retired and informed his colleagues that it was beyond him to know the strange person.

"The gods then appealed to Indra, their king. 'Oh wealthy one, see if you can comprehend this unique person that has defied two of us.'

"Indra, the powerful lord of the gods, agreed. He approached the being but before he could contact him, Brahma had disappeared and in the self-same place stood a charming woman. It was Umā, the goddess of spiritual knowledge, lavishly laden with gold.

"Indra made bold to ask of her, 'Who was that awe-inspiring person who stood ere long in the same place as you stand now?'

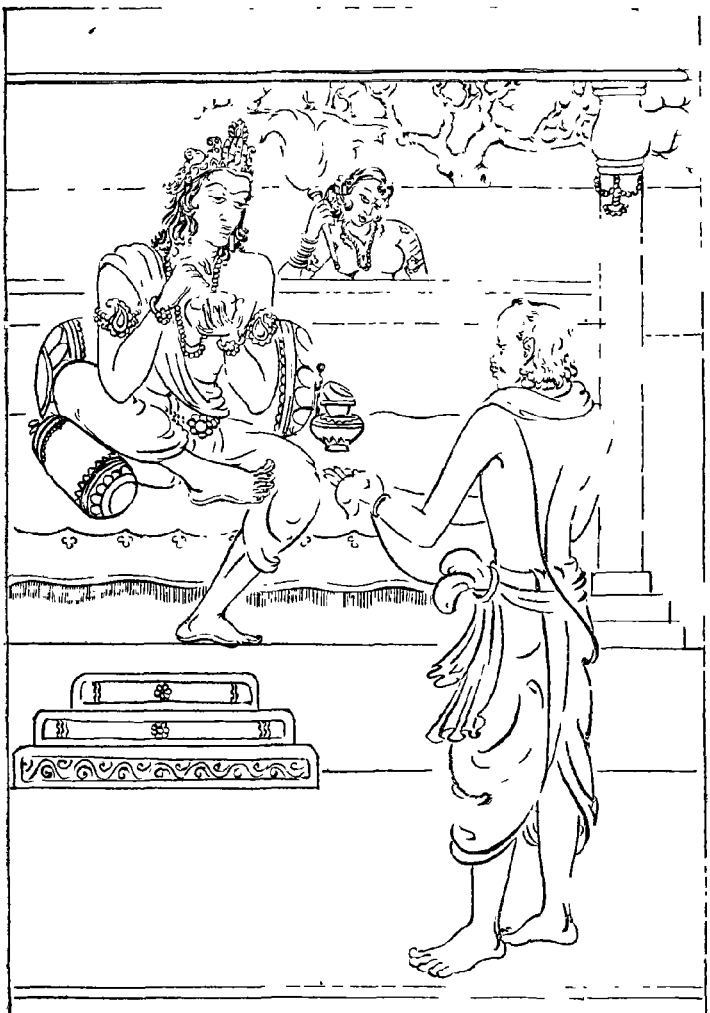
"Umā said, 'Know ye, little minds, that it was Brahma. It was he who won the victory for you, the victory over the demons. Take pride in him who won you victory.'

"When Indra realized that it was Brahma that had appeared to them, he went to his friends and told them the truth. They all realized their folly and gloried in the knowledge of the Supreme God.

"Like a flash of lightning across the clouded skies, in the twinkling of an eye, the vision of Brahma illumines our consciousness. Just as the mind rushes to its favourite objects and remembers them again and again, we must run after and catch the fleeting glimpses of Reality and contemplate upon them. That Reality alone is really adorable in the world. For, the supreme God Brahma and the ultimate Reality are the same."

Rounding off, the sage said, "This is the knowledge of Brahman, the transcendental reality. Truth is the very body and abode of Brahman. All knowledge is its limb; penance, self-control, and good work are its support."

Pleased with their guru's way of teaching, and beaming with joy, the disciples dispersed to their respective resting places to reflect on what they had learnt.



THE KING AND UŚĀSTI CĀKRĀYAṆA

8. THE STORY OF UŚĀSTI

[Like all ceremonies and rituals, the sacrifices later became mechanical and people performed them without knowing their real purpose. This story is one that illustrates this truth. One Uśāsti visits a sacrifice and teaches the secret of sacrifices to the performers. Uśāsti is very virtuous, straightforward and known for his knowledge and integrity.]

Once upon a time there lived in Ibhya, a village in the Kuru country, Uśāsti Cākrāyaṇa with his wife. Though poor and simple, he was known to be very virtuous and learned in the Vedic lore.

It happened that once a dreadful famine swept the country and food became extremely scarce.

One day during that famine he went to the king of the village and begged food of him. The king was sitting with a handful of parched cereals and was eating of them.

When asked for food, the king said most distressfully, "Respected sir, these are the only ones I have and other food have I none. These have been rendered impure as I have been eating out of them."

Uśāsti said, "Never mind, O king. Give me some out of them. They are welcome even if ceremonially they are impure!"

The king then gave him some cereal and offered him also some of the water which he had half drunk.

Uśāsti accepted the cereal, but refused the water and said, "Thank you, kind prince, for the food you have spared for me. But I do not want the impure water. I have enough of water with me. I am accepting the cereal half eaten by you because I would die of hunger if I did not take them from you now. But that is not the case regarding water. I am not suffering from scarcity of water."

Uśāsti then partook of some cereals and took home to his wife what was left over. His wife however had already secured a little food from somewhere and therefore she kept for the morrow the cereals given to her by her husband.

Next morning hungry Uśāsti approached his wife and said to her, "If I get some food now, I can go and get some money from the king to buy food again. He seems to be performing some sacrifice and he will have to give me at least as much money as he is paying to his other priests."

"Here then are the cereals that you gave me yesterday, dear," said the wife to him.

Uśāsti then ate the cereals and went happily to the place of sacrifice.

The sacrifice was being performed with all pomp and splendour. The king was the householder (*yajamāna*) for whose benefit it was being performed. Then there were the different *ṛtwiks* or priests who carried out various functions in the sacrifice.

Uśāsti went straight to the three principal priests and he accosted them one by one saying, "Do you know, learned priest, the god that presides over the particular function you are performing? If you do not know and still you keep on performing your function mechanically and in ignorance, your head will fall down from your shoulders. Beware."

Obviously they did not know the answer.

The *yajamāna* was struck by the bold and straightforward attack against the priests. He said respectfully, "May I know, sir, who you are?"

"Dear householder, I am known as one Uśāsti Cākrāyaṇa," replied Uśāsti.

"Oh sir, we all sought after you and wished that you should preside over the functions. But having not found you for long, we had to begin the sacrifice. Now that you are here, kindly lead the ceremonies." Thus saying the *yajamāna* entrusted the whole sacrifice to Uśāsti.

Uśāsti then took the three priests aside one by one and asked each of them questions which

they could not answer. Then he told them about the presiding deities and of their respective functions.

He said to the first priest, "*Prāṇa* or the vital air is the presiding deity of your function. All these beings enter *prāṇa* and breathe it. If you perform the sacrifice without knowing this, great harm would befall you."

Then he said to the second priest, "*Āditya* or the sun is the deity of your function in the sacrifice. All the beings sing high praise of him. If you perform your function without this knowledge, great harm would befall you."

To the third priest he said, "*Anna* or food is the presiding deity of your function. All beings live by taking food. If you perform sacrifices without your knowing this, great is the harm that would befall you."

Summing up, Uśāsti said, "*Prāṇa* is the essence of life, but *prāṇa* cannot live without *anna* or food and food depends upon the sun-god for its existence and growth. The sun-god here on earth is represented by *Agni* or fire. *Agni* can be satisfied only by offerings at the time of sacrifice."

This is the meaning of sacrifice preached by Uśāsti Cākrāyaṇa.

9. LIFE AFTER DEATH

[As a general rule, man has never reconciled himself to the idea of death as the cessation of the ego. In some form or other, different races of mankind have believed in some kind of continuity of life after death. Four questions on this subject have been answered by a prince in this story. There is also an attempt to explain the origin of life. That is the subject of the fifth question.]

Once upon a time a young Brāhmin named Śvetaketu went to the assembly of Pāncālās. His father had educated him at home and he was under the impression that he had completed his studies and that he knew everything that a Brāhmin should know.

When he entered the assembly, discussions were going on, questions and answers being bandied about. It was usual to hold such an assembly at the time of a sacrifice or a similar ceremony.

Prince Pravāhana, a Kṣatriya, accosted the young new-comer, "Have you had your education, young man?"

Śvetaketu said with pride, "Yes, indeed! I have."

"Do you know where all these people go to from here after death?"

"No sir, I do not know."

"Do you know how they return to this world again?"

"No sir, I do not know."

"Do you know the courses of the two paths along which the dead travel and which are known as the Path of Light (*Devayāna*) and the Path of Darkness (*Pitṛyāna*)?"

"No sir, I do not know."

"Do you know why the other world does not become overful though so many continue to depart from this world and enter it?"

"No sir, I do not know."

"Do you know how in the fifth stage elemental matter becomes the *puruṣa* or the living person?"

"No sir, I do not know."

"Then how dare you say that your education is complete? You do not seem to know anything of this important subject which concerns every one of us," said the prince with some disparagement.

Śvetaketu felt humiliated and thought he had been deceived into thinking that he was adequately educated. So he went straight to his father and said: "Father, you said my education was complete. But when Prince Pravāhana asked me some five questions, believe me, I could not reply to even one of them. How

then did you say that I was sufficiently educated?" He then told his father the whole story about the five questions and his discomfiture in the assembly of the Pāncālās.

"Dear child," replied the father, "I myself do not know the replies to the questions you have just mentioned. I do not know the reply to even one of them. If I had that knowledge, do you think that I would have ever withheld it from you?"

The father then went himself to the Prince to learn at his feet. He bowed to him respectfully and waited at his court.

Next morning when the Prince saw Śvetaketu and his father, he said to the father respectfully, "Sir, I offer you wealth which is dear to all. You may demand as much as you please."

The Brāhmin said, "Great Prince, let the wealth remain with you. I do not want it at all. I want knowledge from you. I want you to talk with me as you talked with my child. I am thirsting for the knowledge of the other world."

The Prince was pleased with the attitude of the Brāhmin and requested him to stay at his court. He said, "Respected Brāhmin, so long this knowledge has been traditionally known only to the Kṣatriyas. It is only now and for

the first time that I am imparting that knowledge to you, a Brāhmin.

"I shall take up the last question first. There are, as it were, five *yajñas* or sacrifices, and as a result of those sacrifices it is that elemental matter is ultimately converted into life or into a person. The other world is the fire and the sun who is elemental matter is the oblation offered to it. The result of this *yajña* is the production of *soma*, the life-giving juice. Then *soma* is poured into *parjanya*, the power that brings on rain. The result is rain itself. Then rain is poured as an offering on the earth and food is the result. When food is offered to man and when he digests it the vital fluid called *Reta* is produced. When *Reta* enters the body of a woman the embryo is born and then a child. Thus is elemental matter converted into life after five stages."

Then he gave answers to the other four questions. He said, "Since a man's body is made up of the four elements, it is dissolved into those constituents after death. But the destiny of his soul depends upon his actions and his knowledge. If he has attained real spiritual knowledge he goes by *Devayāna*, the Path of Light, and does not return to this earthly existence. His soul becomes immortal. But if he has led a life of desires and spent it in doing

good deeds out of a desire for heaven, his soul goes by *Pitṛyāna*, the Path of Darkness, to heaven, remains there till his merit is exhausted and then hurries back to this world and takes birth according to the general nature of his former actions.

"But if his is a life of sin and evil deeds and of wickedness, if he was all along engaged in stealing, drinking, killing and debauch or in associating with people occupied with these sinful acts (these are the five great sins) he forfeits his claim to both immortality and heaven. He is born and reborn here on earth and he goes through the cycle of lives of insects and worms and of vile vermin and suffers interminably.

"Thus of those who are born on earth, some pass on and away to the world of Brahman, from which there is no return. Some others go to heaven, stay there for a time and then return to the worldly existence. Numerous others are caught up in the ever-recurring cycle of birth and death. That is why the other world never becomes overful. There is no such danger either!"

This is the knowledge of life, its origin, and of the destiny of the Soul after death. This knowledge was given by Pravāhana Jaivali, a Kṣatriya Prince to a Brāhmin for the first time.

10. THE FOUR VARṆAS

[The fourfold division of Hindu Society into Brāhmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śudra seems to be quite ancient. The *Ṛg-Veda* mentions the division and says that these emerged from the different parts of the body of the *Virāṭa Puruṣa* or the primeval mighty being. It is clear that originally the division was functional and not hereditary. Here is an explanation of that system given in an allegorical manner. It is said here that society is complete and perfect on account of the existence of all these four divisions but much more so on account of the law which binds all and which all ought to obey.]

The Creator, Prajāpati, first created the god Brahma. He represented Intelligence. But the Creator was not satisfied with so little. He felt that he should create other gods also if creation were to be a complete manifestation of the various powers in him. He created the Kṣatriya gods, Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama and others. They were the embodiments of power, valour, brilliance, fearlessness, the tendency to govern, and such other qualities.

But the Creator was not satisfied even with these new gods. He saw that there was still something wanting in creation. So he created the Vaiśya gods, the eight Vasus, Āditya, the Maruts and so on.

But then he saw that the society of gods he wanted to evolve was not yet complete. So he added Pūsan to the creation. He represents the Śudra principle, namely, service.

Even this did not satisfy the Creator. He therefore created Dharma or the law which binds all, which keeps all in their own places and which strengthens all who act according to it. Those who do not follow the law fall away, however strong they might be. Those who follow the law are stronger than the strongest because they adhere to the law. He who speaks the law speaks the truth. He who speaks the truth, speaks the law. Truth and the law are one.

Corresponding to this creation in the heavens, Prajāpati created human society also on the same pattern and laid down the law for all the four *Varṇas*. The law lays down the functions of the four pillars of the social system. Those who follow the law and perform their functions accordingly have nothing to fear. They are stronger than the strongest and they are bound to be happier than the happiest.

Intelligence, sacrifice, disinterested service are the characteristics of the Brāhmins. Valour, chivalry, forgiveness, ability to rule are the characteristics of the Kṣatriyas. Trade, co-operation, agriculture and distribution of

wealth are the characteristics of the Vaiśyas. Ungrudging service is the characteristic of the Sudras.

To choose our functions according to our powers and to attune our powers to the functions that we take up, is the only way to follow the law.

11. PARĀ AND APARĀ VIDYĀ

[There are two categories of knowledge, declares the rishi of *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*—knowledge of this world and knowledge of the other world, material knowledge (*aparā vidyā*) and spiritual knowledge (*parā vidyā*). The same thing has been again taken up in the *Chāndogya* by Nārada and Sanatkumāra. In fact both ought to be acquired and both are equally important. Nor are they mutually exclusive. One is incomplete without the other. This has been very strongly emphasized by the *Īśā Upaniṣad*.]

"The higher (*parā*) and the lower (*aparā*) knowledge or the knowledge of the spirit and the knowledge of matter, both ought to be acquired, so say those who know Brahman," declared the sage Angirasa to Śaunaka when the latter approached him as a disciple.

All the Vedas, grammar, philosophy, astronomy, astrology and all such knowledge falls in the category of *aparā* or lower learning. That knowledge by which Brahman is known, that by which the unseen and the unknown, the one eternal all-pervasive being is known, is the *parā* or higher learning.

Nārada once approached the sage Sanatkumāra and requested him to show him the path of knowledge. Sanatkumāra said, "Let

me first know what you have already learnt. I shall teach you something further than that."

Nārada then said, "Sir I have learnt the *Ṛg-Veda*, the *Yajur-Veda*, the *Sāma-Veda*, the *Atharwa-Veda*, history and traditional stories which are together called the fifth Veda, the method of remembering and repeating the Vedas, the technique of *śrāddha* ceremony, grammar, philology, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, science of augury, jugglery, logic, ethics, information about different gods who represent different forces or powers, science of animals, science of war, and so on. But, sir, I feel I merely know the *mantras* or potent words but I do not know the Ātman or the soul or the spirit of things. I have heard from men like you that he who knows the Ātman goes beyond all sorrow. Sir, I am full of sorrow and grief and remorse. I hope and believe that you will be able to lead me out of all these by favouring me with real knowledge."

"Dear Nārada, all that you have known is but mere name and verbiage, mere words. You can by your present knowledge achieve only what words can achieve and nothing more."

"What is greater than name and words? Please teach me that," said Nārada.

"Yes, the power of speech is greater than words. If there had been no power of speech there would have been no words, no Vedas, no truth or untruth, no religion or irreligion, no good or bad."

"Is there anything still greater than the power of speech?" queried Nārada.

"Certainly. Mind is greater. It is the mind that is conscious of both the word and the power of speech. When a man thinks that he should learn the *mantras*, he learns them. Otherwise not. When he thinks he ought to do a thing, he does it, not otherwise."

"Is there anything greater than the mind?"

"Why not? The will is greater than the mind. If there is no will, nothing happens. It is the will that holds all things together."

"What is greater than the will?"

"Consciousness is greater than the will. It is consciousness that begets activity. Then there is the will that impels the mind to think. Speech follows and words take shape. If a man's consciousness is scattered he is not alert and he cannot do things."

"Dear sir, is there anything that is greater than consciousness?"

"Of course, there is. Meditation is greater than mere consciousness. Even the earth and the sky and the mountains are as it were

meditating and therefore standing firm and steady. If there were no meditation, nothing would stand firm and steady."

"Please tell me if there is something which is greater than meditation."

"Yes, the power of understanding is greater than meditation. Good and bad, truth and untruth, the Vedas and Purāṇas, this world and the next, all these can be known only if there is the power of understanding."

"Is there anything still greater than understanding?"

"Yes, dear friend. Power is greater than mere understanding. A single powerful man inspires fear into a hundred men with brains and understanding. When a man with physical power gets up and goes about, when he becomes learned, when he becomes a seer, a thinker, a doer of things, becomes a man of understanding, he is greater than all. It is power that supports the earth, the sky, the mountains, beasts and men and gods and everything that exists on earth or in heaven."

"Is there anything that is greater than physical power?"

"Yes, food is greater. If a man does not eat for ten days he may die, or even if he lives, he may lose his powers of speech, of action, of hearing, and of thinking. When

he begins to take food his powers return to him."

"Is there anything greater than food?"

"Yes, water is greater. If there are no rains no food grows. For want of water all living beings would fade away. When there are rains all animals are quite happy."

"What is greater than water?"

"Heat or light is greater. If there were no heat, the water from the earth would not evaporate and there would be no rain without evaporation."

"What is greater than heat?"

"The ether or *ākāśa* is greater. It is in ether that all things happen. The sun and the moon and the worlds float about in ether. Ether is the cause of sound waves which makes hearing possible."

"What is greater than ether?"

"Well, there is the Ātman, the spirit. That is the substratum of everything else.

"Man is always impelled to do things on account of the joy or the pleasure that he gets out of the things that he does. No one acts or does anything unless motivated by some kind of pleasure or joy. And joy consists in abundance, not in want. It is infinity and not limitation that can give joy. That infinity can be realized only by living a unitary life and not

by living a life impeded by a sense of separation or isolation or limitation. When a man sees not anything but one, hears not and knows not anything but the one Ātman, he is experiencing infinity. When a man sees, knows things other than the Ātman, it is misery and sorrow that follow. The abundant and the infinite are immortal while things limited are mortal. The spirit lives by its own power and exists by its own support and greatness. Those who have realized the spirit are great on account of self-possession and not on account of the possession of houses and cows, and servants and lands.

"The spirit pervades the four quarters. It is up above as well as below. It is called the Ātman. He who knows this Ātman is absorbed in it. He sports with it, he enjoys its company as that of a mate. He is full of joy. He is his own monarch and fully self-possessed and self-controlled.

"This realization of the spirit can dawn upon us when our mind is clean and pure. Our minds would be clean and pure when we feed upon pure food. A clean and pure mind alone can concentrate upon truth. Truth then will shine in the heart of hearts like the rising sun."

That is *parā vidyā* or spiritual realization which bestows immortality and eternal bliss.

12. THE BOLD BEGGAR

[In the Upaniṣads we often come across rishis who are in search of truth, worshipping different gods, thinking them to be the highest ones. Some of them sought the form more than the spirit. But they were brought to reason by some incident or by someone's advice. Here is a lesson taught by a *brahmacāri* to two rishis. He says, "You are worshipping the wind-god ignoring that he pervades me also."]

Once there lived two rishis known as Śaunaka and Abhipratāri. They were the worshippers of Vāyu or the wind-god. On a certain day at noon they were about to begin their lunch when there was a knock at the door. A young *brahmacāri* who was hungry was at the door asking for alms.

"No boy, not at this hour," was the reply. The boy was not a stranger to such treatment. But he was not a little surprised when he faced such disappointment at the *āśrama* of a rishi. So he decided to cross swords with the owner of the *āśrama* and stuck on.

He addressed the owner once more. "Respected sir, may I know which god you worship?"

One of the rishis said, "You seem to be impertinent enough. Well, my deity is Vāyu, the wind-god. He is also called Prāṇa."

"Then you must be knowing that the world takes shape in Prāṇa and merges in it at the end. You must also be knowing that Prāṇa pervades all that is visible and invisible," said the *brahmacāri*.

The rishi said, "Why not? We do know it. You are telling us nothing new."

"For whom, sirs, have you cooked this food? May I know?" was the next question.

"Of course, for the deity that we worship. For whom else can it be?" came the ready reply.

"If Prāṇa pervades the universe, so does he pervade me who am but a part of the universe. It is he who pulsates in this hungry body that is standing before you begging for a few morsels!"

"Yes, what you speak is the truth."

"Then, dear rishis, in denying food to me you deny food to the Prāṇa in me. Thus you are denying food to the deity for whom you have prepared it!" said the boy pointedly.

The rishis felt ashamed, and then respectfully invited the *brahmacāri* in. Then they served him with food along with themselves. They realized that they were obsessed with the form while it was the spirit that really mattered.

13. A STRING OF QUESTIONS

[Six questions in which one is more advanced than the other have been asked and answered in one of the Upaniṣads. That Upaniṣad itself therefore goes by the name of "the Upaniṣad of Questions". The questions begin with the gross and the known and then dive deeper into the subtle and the unknown. The seer of this Upaniṣad ultimately explains the nature of the Spirit and then of consciousness in man. He describes the *puruṣa* or the person who co-ordinates all consciousness.

Here is a typical picture of the enquirers of those times and the way they went about seeking after truth.]

A band of six youthful seekers after truth bent upon knowing Brahman started on a journey in search of a suitable guru. Sukeśa, Satyakāma, Gārgya, Aśwalāyana, Bhārgava and Kabandhi went along and reached the famous hermitage of the sage Pippalāḍa. "He would certainly answer satisfactorily all our queries," they thought. As he sat there calm and collected on his simple seat of straw, all the six approached him with the symbolic bits of fuel in their hands for lighting the sacrificial fire signifying that they went to him as disciples to light the torch of knowledge.

The sage welcomed them with a gentle and loving smile. He requested them to stay in the *āśrama* for a year with faith, doing *tapas* or

penance and conducting themselves as *brahmacāris* (those who follow a certain discipline while seeking Brahman). He added, "While staying here you may question me as you please without any reserve. Whatever I know about the problems that agitate you, I shall gladly lay before you."

As they stayed along and became the inmates of the *āśrama*, Kabandhi one day at question-hour, after the daily prayers, put the first question: "Whence is all this that is visible?"

Muni Pippalāḍa said, "The Lord of Creation willed to create. He concentrated and contemplated—performed *tapas*. Out of such *tapas* or concentration of power was born a duet or couple, matter and energy. He was confident that that primary creation would further create for him the varied universe he wanted to create. All that has visible or invisible form is matter. The existence of such duets is to be seen everywhere in the universe. The sun and the moon, the day and the night, the bright fortnight and the dark one, are all such twins. Between them they create the whole universe—the sun energizes the universe as he rises in the east, resplendent and bright as burnished gold with millions of rays shooting across infinite space. They who create anything follow the discipline of the Lord of Creation. Those who do penance,

conduct themselves as *brahmacāris*, and have truth in them attain the world of Brahman. There, in that world, is no evil, nor untruth, nor deception of any kind."

After some days, one evening, when all the disciples were sitting round the Master, Bhārgava asked the next question. It had been realized that creation came from Prajāpati and that the living being was the crown of creation. But then which are the gods or forces which support creation and the living beings? Which power gives the animal its superiority over other things? Which is the power that is predominant? That was the next question.

Pippalāḍa said: "Well, various are the replies that men give to this question. There is, they say, ether, wind, fire, water, earth, the power of speech, the eyes, the ears, and the mind. All these support the body and make it possible for it to carry on its functions. But Prāṇa, the principle that makes breathing possible, the vital force, claims pre-eminence, and says that it supports the body by carrying on a five-fold activity. The other powers, however, did not verily believe in this claim of Prāṇa. But Prāṇa proved its claim. Once it went out of the body and lo! every other power had to follow, and the body lay motionless. Prāṇa is like the queen bee and when it leaves the hive

it is notice to the others to quit instantly. In fact, the vital force is the source of all energy and movement. Every thing is controlled by Prāṇa."

This explanation led to the next question as to whence comes this Prāṇa, how it enters the body, in what ways and places it disposes itself in the body and how it departs, how it supports the inner and outer structure of the body. This question was asked by Aśwalāyana.

In answer to this, Pippalāḍa said, "You are now going deeper and asking subtler questions. But since you are a votary of truth I shall try to satisfy you to the utmost possible extent. Who else but the Spirit can be the source of Prāṇa? Prāṇa pervades the whole body, and like a king orders about the other vital forces, namely, Apāna, Udāna, Vyāna and Samāna, to take their positions in the different parts of the body. Prāṇa itself resides in the mouth and the nostrils. In the heart resides the Ātman or the soul. Prāṇa departs through the Udāna way and goes to deserving worlds. The sun is the embodiment of external Prāṇa which supports the whole physical world. The Prāṇa in the body supports the body from inside."

The universe was created by Prajāpati by the concentration of sheer will-force. The universe is supported by Prāṇa, and the living being who

is the crown of creation, is also supported by Prāṇa or the vital air. Prāṇa itself in its turn is born of Ātman or the principle of consciousness. We have come so far. This naturally takes us to the next question asked by Gārgya about the functions of consciousness.

"In this living person, who sleeps and who keeps awake? Which god or power witnesses dreams? Who is it that enjoys and who that suffers? And in whom do all these powers of consciousness stand firm in co-ordination?"

Pippalāḍa, ever ready to satisfy the curiosity of his favourite inquisitive disciples, said, "Like the rays of the rising and the setting sun, these powers of consciousness are centred in the mind. While asleep, the person sees not, hears not, speaks not. In fact, he is innocent of all consciousness. It is only the vital fires that are awake and keep the person living. They bring him back to consciousness, after daily taking him to Brahman as it were, during deep sleep.

"When not fully asleep, the person enjoys his wishes or desires in a dream-state. He goes through the same experiences that he has already undergone during waking hours. Sometimes, he sees things unseen, hears things unheard and experiences things never before experienced. When completely devoid of waking consciousness, he enjoys sound sleep and is

happy. Then like the birds roosting in the nests in some tree, all his powers are merged in the great Ātman. The subject as well as the object, the ear as well as sound, the eye as well as all that is seen, all are one with the Ātman. That Ātman, that Spirit, is the seer, the hearer, the thinker, and does all possible things. He is like pure consciousness. He is the Person and is the eternal Spirit beyond everything. He is bodyless and shadowless. He is white and brilliant. One who knows this Ātman enjoys the eternal blissful state."

After the description of the eternal Ātman or the Supreme Spirit, the next question that arises is about the attainment of this Ātman. What are the means, what is the *sādhana* or the spiritual discipline for attaining that end?

Satyakāma therefore asked the fifth question about *sādhana* or the means.

"What world does a man attain if he contemplates on the great mystic symbol *AUM*?"

The Muni analysed the symbol and explained to his disciples the various states attainable by *Upāsana* or devotional worship of *AUM*. He says, "*AUM* is made up of three syllables. The first syllable represents the worship and praise of various powers according to the *Ṛg-Veda*. The result is prosperity on earth. The second represents the performance of rituals according

to the *Yajur-Veda*. The result is the attainment of heaven and a return to this earth after the exhaustion of one's accumulated merit. The third represents the meditation on the Supreme Spirit according to the *Sāma-Veda*. That, the integral meditation, is the path to eternity. One who follows that purely spiritual path without any desires for fruit becomes as free and light as a serpent that has thrown off its slough. He is wafted on the wings of Sāma music to the world of the Supreme Spirit. The wise always choose that path, however long and weary that might be. For it is the best."

The last question was put in a rather peculiar manner. Sukeśa said, "Gurudeva, the prince Hiraṇyagarbha came to me and asked me if I knew the *Puruṣa* or person with sixteen divisions or *kalās*. I said, 'I know not and if I knew how could I keep it away from you? He who tells a lie runs the risk of being scorched root and branch. I dare not tell a lie.' The prince went away disappointed. I now ask you the question as to who is that 'person'?"

The sage was now practically at the end of his labours. This was the last question coming from his clever disciples.

He said, "It is in this body that the 'person' resides. The sixteen *kalās* or divisions exist in this person alone. Prāṇa or vital air, faith,

ether, wind, light, water, earth, sense, mind, food, physical force, penance, *mantra* or the potent word, action, worlds and name are the sixteen *kalās* or divisions of an individual. When rivers merge in the ocean they lose their separate name and identity. So too do these divisions lose all name and form when merged in the person. Then what exists is the person and not the divisions as such. The essence of that person is the spirit itself. There is no knowledge greater than this."

Thus rounded off Pippalāḍa Muni. The expectations of the disciples were fulfilled and they took leave of the Guru to pursue their own careers.

14. GODS AND DEMONS

[There is an eternal conflict between the gods and the demons. They are usually depicted as rivals in a contest for power. But here they are shown as rivals in attaining the highest knowledge. The demons are defeated in this competition as their representative is shallow and is satisfied with superficial knowledge, while the representative of the gods persists and finally gets at true knowledge. It is not any external shape or form that really distinguishes a god from a demon; it is the inner attitude of a person towards the eternal realities of life that decide his category. This fact has been illustrated by a beautiful allegory by the seer of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.]

Once Prajāpati declared, "The Ātman is unscathed by sin. He is untouched by old age, death and sorrow of any kind. Hunger and thirst affect him not. He desires nothing but truth. His will is in tune with the reality and therefore is always fulfilled. It is this Ātman that ought to be sought and ought to be known. He who tries to find out this Ātman and understand him obtains all the worlds and has all his desires fulfilled."

Both the gods and the demons heard of this great pronouncement. They thought, "We shall try to know the Ātman. We shall seek this knowledge that promises all the worlds and

the fulfilment of all desires. Indra, king of the gods, and Virocana, the leader of the demons, went to Prajāpati with the sacrificial fuel in their hands like disciples.

When Prajāpati saw them he asked them, "With what intent are you here, dear friends?"

They said, "Great Preceptor, sir, it is in order to know from your lips the knowledge of the Ātman that we have come to you."

Prajāpati then asked them to stay with him for thirty-two years. They stayed on observing the strict discipline of a *brahmacāri*. At the end of that period, Prajāpati addressed both of them:

"This, the person that is visible in the pupil of the eye is the Ātman. This Ātman is immortal, is fearless. This is Brahman. It is this that is visible in the water and the mirror when you look into them. Look into both and tell me what you see. Inform me if you do not know the Ātman even then."

They went again the next day. Prajāpati asked them, "Friends, what is it that you observed?"

"Sir, we saw all this self of ours. We saw the exact replica of this body from head to foot, from top to toe," said both of them.

Then again Prajāpati told them, "Shave yourselves clean, put on fine clothes and

ornaments. Then look into the water or the mirror and report to me your impressions."

Next morning, both the god Indra and the demon Virocana approached Prajāpati and said, "We saw ourselves clean-shaven, well-dressed and fully decorated in the water."

"That is the Ātman, the fearless and the deathless one. That is Brahman," said Prajāpati.

At this reply both of them seemed to be quite satisfied and they went their way.

Prajāpati saw them going away and exclaimed to himself, "Without having known the real Ātman, without obtaining real knowledge they are going away. Whether they be gods or demons they will inevitably perish if they are satisfied with the mere reflection of the reality."

Self-satisfied Virocana went to the demons and taught them this knowledge. He fancied that that was the final truth. He said to them, "This self is to be glorified. This self is to be served. Glorifying this bodily self and serving it we obtain both the worlds, this as well as the next."

Even today the *asuras* or demons have no true knowledge of the Ātman. They are of little faith, and they do not give with faith and they perform no sacrifices. They believe this body itself to be the Ātman. They decorate the body

It is not conscious of its own existence. How then can that unconscious existence be the Ātman which is described as the ever luminous and the ever conscious self?"

So he retraced his steps once more to his guru and explained to him his difficulties.

Prajāpati was more kind this time and asked him to spend only five years more with him. Thus Indra had to stay more than a hundred years in all at his guru's place.

After the stay of five years, Prajāpati called Indra and said, "O Indra, you have deserved the knowledge of the highest truth by your persistent effort, tenacity of purpose, and by your penetrative enquiry. This body is a perishable piece of matter. It is devoured by death when the time comes. This is the mortal abode of the immortal bodyless spirit. So long as the spirit lives and is in this body and is attached to it, it seems to be affected by good and bad, by the desirable and the undesirable. But essentially the bodyless spirit is beyond all dualities. The wind, the cloud, the lightning take form and shape for a time in the formless and shapeless sky. They vanish after their time and function are over. So too bodies take shape and form and vanish away but are the abodes of the Ātman for the time being. So long as the Ātman resides in such bodies and

attaches himself to them he seems limited and restricted but again when freed from the body becomes one with the infinite Spirit. When the Ātman leaves the body he goes wandering freely in the infinite worlds. The eye, the ear, the senses, the mind are there only in order that the Ātman may see and hear and think. It is on account of the Ātman and in the Ātman that things and beings exist. He is the Truth and the final repository of all existence."

Indra in turn imparted this knowledge to the gods. It is to this knowledge that they owe their godliness.

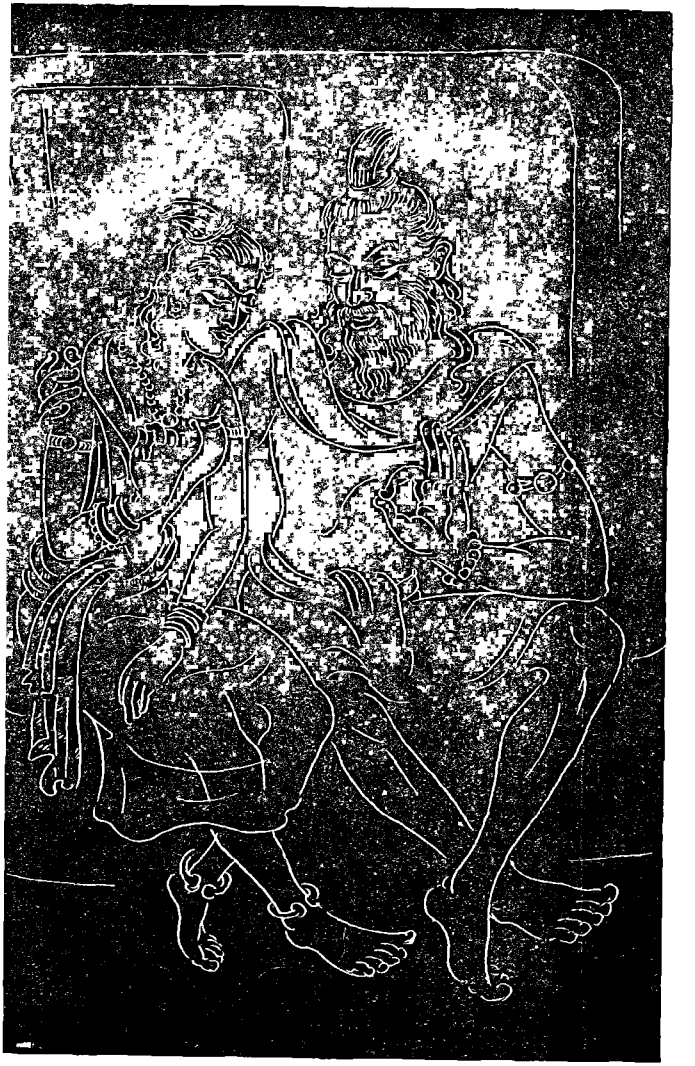
15. THUS SPAKE YĀJÑAVALKYA

[Wealth can buy convenience and comfort but not inner peace which alone is worthy of possession. There is a poise of consciousness where one realizes that 'one' alone exists without any second or any 'other'. That is a poise beyond all dualities. The attainment of that stage alone gives real final peace and the go-by to all doubts. That is the lesson taught by the rishi here to his wife Maitreyī. The classic conversation between this extremely loving pair is admittedly very eloquent. Passages from it are often quoted. The beautiful story occurs in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.*]

The great seer Yājñavalkya had two wives, Maitreyī and Kalyāṇī. Of them Maitreyī was a true seeker after truth. She was a *brahma-vādinī,* one who discusses the Brahman, and meditates upon it. Kalyāṇī was like all other ordinary women, attached to worldly things and busy with household affairs.

After leading a householder's life for years, the rishi Yājñavalkya thought of changing the mode of his life and of taking to *sannyāsa* or the fourth stage in life which is one of complete renunciation of the world.

He therefore called Maitreyī to his side one day and said to her, "I am thinking of renouncing the world. I want to be a *sannyāsi,* I wish



MAITREYĪ AND YĀJÑAVALKYA

much as I know of it. Listen to me attentively and meditate constantly upon it."

He continued, "Dear one, we find in this world that the husband is pleased with his wife and the wife is pleased with her husband. They please each other and love each other not because they are in the relation of husband and wife. The husband is not loved for his own sake nor is the wife loved for her own sake. They both love each other because they find their own selves in each other. They are satisfied with each other because each of them identifies the other with his or her own self. So it is the self that is loved and not any other thing. The children are dear to us not for their own sake, not because they are merely children, nor because they are our children, but because we find our selves in them. Wealth and cattle and all beings around us are dear to us not because they are themselves, but because we find our own selves extended in them or because we can find our selves in them or through them. The gods and the worlds are dear to us not for their own sake. We do not love them by themselves, nor because they are what they are but because we hope to realize our own self, the Ātman, through them or by their help. Above all we love the Vedas, we study them. But mind, it is not for their sake. We love them because

we believe that they would lead us to the knowledge of the spirit in us. It is thus for the sake of the inner soul, the inner self of things, or the Ātman that man loves. That is the uppermost motive of our love for things.

"That spirit, that inner soul of things, is the one thing that deserves to be seen, to be heard of, to be thought about and meditated upon. O dear Maitreyī, when that spirit, that great self, is seen, heard, thought about, meditated upon and known, all else is known. The knowledge of the Ātman includes the knowledge of all other things. It supersedes all other knowledge. This Ātman is the first and the last of things. All this that is visible and invisible is the Ātman. When that Ātman is known, all else is known.

"When a big drum is being beaten, we cannot catch hold of the waves of sound that vibrate from it. But certainly when we hold the drum itself, we control the sound as well. So too when the *veeṇā* or the stringed-instrument is being played upon, the numerous tunes that emerge from it are intangible and cannot be imprisoned. But certainly when we get hold of the instrument itself we can control the tunes and play upon it at will. So too can we know the multifarious world in all its wild variety only when we know the Ātman, the inner soul of things that pervades all things.

16. THUS SPAKE UDDĀLAKA ĀRUṆĪ

[Though Yājñavalkya seems by far to be the most dominant personality in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, Āruṇī's power of exposition in the *Chāndogya* is very refreshing. He is easily the most brilliant rishi in the latter Upaniṣad. By a number of homely illustrations he conveys to his son the subtle knowledge of the Ātman and impresses upon him the fact that, in essence, he too is the Ātman. "That thou art" is the burden of his talk. The affectionate father repeats it at the end of each of his illustrations and through this pregnant phrase he preaches the gospel of the one God in man and in all things.]

"No idiot has yet been begotten in our line nor has any in our family neglected the study of the Vedas. So, young soul, go to a *gurukula*, be a *brahmacāri* and learn the Vedas." The sage Uddālaka Āruṇī thus addressed his young son Śvetaketu when he attained the proper age to go to a preceptor for study.

The dutiful son obeyed his father. After studying all the Vedas for twelve long years at the feet of his guru, he came home. When the father saw him, he could at once perceive that his son had become a man of learning but that he had missed spiritual training and teaching. Instead of humility he had developed conceit and

instead of peace, there was turmoil in his mind.

One day the father said to him, "Dear child, did you not ask your guru to teach you that mystic wisdom which is the key to all other knowledge, to all other thought, and that wisdom which unfolds the unknown to man?"

Svetaketu was not a little surprised when thus accosted by his father. He instinctively felt that something was lacking in his own education. So he said to his father, "Dear father, what is that wondrous knowledge that you speak of? Do teach me that yourself. Obviously my guru did not know the knowledge you refer to, otherwise he would not have failed to impart it to me."

"Dear child, it is something like this. You know that these earthen pots and playthings round about are made of earth. Once you understand the essential nature of the earth of which these are all made, you understand and know all these things also. Then all these are mere forms and names of forms which the earth has assumed. The essence of them all, the thing that matters is the earth. So too if you understand the nature of a particular metal, everything that is made of that metal is known to you. The various things that are made of that metal are then mere names and forms.

out the waters of the various rivers? No. So is the case with these various beings when they merge in the One Being. That thou art, O Śvetaketu!

"If you strike a tree at the root, or in the middle or at the top, some sap oozes out but the tree still lives. If you cut off a branch here and there from the tree, that branch fades and dies away but the tree still lives on. Thus that which is deprived of its life dies but life itself does not die. The power by which life lives eternally is the Spirit. That thou art, O Śvetaketu!"

Śvetaketu listened to all this very attentively but he was still at a loss to know as to how to comprehend the intangible Ātman. So he asked his father, "How to know this subtle thing, dear father? Tell me that."

Then Uddālaka thought of a simple device. He pointed out to a big banian tree nearby and asked his son to bring a ripe fruit from that tree. When he brought it he told his son, "Split it into two, dear child."

"Here you are. I have split it into two."

"What do you find there?"

"Innumerable tiny seeds of course, and what else?"

"Well, take one of those seeds and split it again."

"Yes, here it is. I have split a seed."

"What do you find there?"

"Why, nothing at all."

"O dear child! This big tree cannot come out of nothing. Only you cannot see that subtle something in the seed from which springs forth this mighty tree. That is the power, that is the spirit unseen which pervades everywhere and everything. Have faith. It is that spirit which is at the root of all existence. That thou art, O Śvetaketu!"

"This is something very baffling, father. But how on earth can I realize it, even if I merely know it?"

Uddālaka said, "Just do one thing. Take a few crystals of salt and put them into a bowl of water while you go to sleep and bring it on to me in the morning."

The obedient son did as he was told to do and on the next morning took the bowl to his father.

The father said, "Dear son, take out the salt please."

Śvetaketu felt exasperated and said, "Father, what do you mean? How is it possible to take out that salt?"

"All right. Then just taste the water on the surface. How does it taste?"

"It is saltish and is bound to be so."

Then the son went away and began to meditate further.

Next he realized that prāṇa or the vital power was Brahman and that it was out of prāṇa that things took their birth and into prāṇa they finally merged. Prāṇa indeed is the life-giving principle.

But that too was not a satisfactory conclusion. His father asked him to go into meditation again. He then found that the mind or the psychic plane was the thing from which all creation emerged and into it merged again at the end. It was subtler than gross matter and prāṇa and could pervade both of them.

He reported this observation to his father. But the father sent him back again with the old advice to perform more *tapas*.

Bhṛgu again meditated and found that the power of understanding (*vijñāna*) was the thing from which all things issued and towards which all things moved. But the father was not satisfied and repeated his advice to his son.

The son again meditated and finally came to the conclusion that bliss or pure joy was Brahman—the source and the goal of all creation. All the beings are verily born in bliss, they exist by the power of bliss, and they all move towards bliss and into bliss they all merge in the end.

When Bhṛgu told his father about this conclusion of his, he was over-joyed and said, "Dear child, this indeed is the highest term of existence. All these five sheaths are there, one more subtle than the other, but the finest and the subtlest is bliss eternal. These are not all mutually exclusive. They are inter-penetrating. But the basis of all is bliss, the bliss of Brahman, pure spiritual happiness. He who knows this and realizes it goes beyond all sorrow and death." This is known as the *Bhārgavī Vāruṇī Vidyā.*

18. THE BLISS OF BRAHMAN

[In the *Taittirīya .Upaniṣad* there is a short chapter named "Brahmānanda Vallī" which speaks about highest spiritual bliss. There is a discussion about it and various kinds of joy or bliss are graded. It is interesting to note the grading.]

"Who could have been able to breathe and who could have been able to live if this infinite ether had not been full of joy or bliss?" Thus does a rishi ask us. This is a fine poser.

When a man realizes the one indivisible Ātman, he attains a fearless state of mind. He enjoys bliss. So long as he sees and perceives two separate things in this world, so long as he senses duality, he harbours fear in his mind. The perception of duality is the root of fear. It is that fear which haunts the steps of the ignorant and the unthinking.

The spirit is all-powerful. It is the fear of the Ātman that keeps the sun, the moon and the stars in their proper track. The winds and the rains too obey Him out of fear. But when once a man realizes that the Ātman pervades everywhere and is also at the centre of his own existence, he sheds all fear and enjoys bliss. That unmixed bliss falls to the lot of only those

who are learned in the Vedas and are not fettered by personal desires.

Infinite indeed is that spiritual bliss. But can we get any idea of that bliss? Can we have a measure of it?

Let us suppose that there is a strong, well-built, virtuous young man. If he is a man of firm mind and fair ambitions and if he is the owner of this world which is full of wealth, he enjoys full happiness. That may be taken as the measure of full human happiness. That is a unit. But a hundred-fold is the happiness of human Gandharvas and a hundred-fold of that happiness is the happiness of heavenly Gandharvas. A thousand-fold of that happiness again is the happiness of the gods. A thousand-fold of the happiness of the gods is the happiness of Indra who is lord of the gods. Then hundred-fold of that happiness is the happiness of Bṛhaspati. Hundred-fold of that happiness is the happiness of Prajāpati and again hundred-fold of that is the happiness of Brahman, the Highest Being.

And the man learned in the Vedas and unfettered by personal desires enjoys the happiness that Brahman enjoys!

He who knows this and he who knows the bliss of Brahman lives beyond all fear and enjoys immortal life.

19. THE PARTING MESSAGE

[The span of *āśrama* life for students was usually twelve years. The students lived with their preceptors and served them and the *āśrama* during that period. They learnt the Vedas, maintained the sacrificial fire and studied whatever the guru taught them. Below is given a 'standard' message from a guru to a departing disciple at the end of the period. This might be said to be a 'Convocation Address' if we liken the *āśramas* of old to the 'residential universities' of today. This occurs in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad.*]

Young boys of ten or twelve years entered the *āśramas* of old and were entrusted to the care of the guru or the preceptor. They spent twelve long years in study and sport, in service and *sādhana* or spiritual discipline. They were called *brahmacāris*, that is, those who take up a particular discipline in order to know Brahman. *Brahmacarya* is not mere continence, but a whole code of disciplined conduct which aims at the conservation, development and concentration of physical, mental and moral energy in order to attain the highest spiritual goal.

The twelve strenuous years thus spent by the youngsters in the very home of the guru and in close association with him naturally built up very strong and affectionate relations between

them. The gurus were expected to take almost parental interest in their charges, while the disciples were to render filial obedience to the gurus.

Let us imagine that in one such *āśrama* a day dawns when a disciple is about to depart and step out into the wide world. He is leaving the charmed circle of the *āśrama* to battle with the currents and cross-currents of life. He is to transfer himself from the cloister to the market-place. He is now to test in the world of experience what he has learnt within the precincts of the academy. He is to cut off his moorings in the sheltered bay and launch the boat of his life into the open sea. Throbs of fears and thrills of anticipated adventures fill the young man as he contemplates the prospect before him. The guru too feels the wrench and his heart is full of affection and some anxiety regarding the future of his young disciple. But the separation is inevitable—it has to come one day. In fact, by that separation alone can the future development of his student be ensured.

Such are the mixed feelings that surge in the hearts of the two souls when the Vedic guru gives the parting message to the *brahmacāri* after his study of the Vedas is over.

"My dear child, your study of the Vedas is over. Now go forth into the wide world.

"Speak the truth and practise the *Dharma* or the Law. Never fail nor falter in the study of that part of the Veda which has been assigned to you. Study more but never less than thy portion.

"Give to your preceptor such wealth and such things as are dear to him. Never allow your line of life to lapse. Behind you, you must leave children.

"Never falter from the truth nor from the Law. Never stint nor make mistakes in doing good. Never neglect to do that which would lead to prosperity.

"Do not give up your studies and do not stop teaching.

"You ought not to omit to do your duties towards your gods and ancestors, nor commit mistakes in performing them.

"Revere your father and mother as much as you revere God. Let your preceptor be looked upon as God. Let your guest get the same respect as is due to God.

"Be thou faultless and pure in thought and action. Only such of our qualities and actions as are clearly good should be cherished by you and not others. Such knowers of Brahman as are greater than ourselves ought to be respected by you by offering them a seat reverently.

"Whilst giving, give with faith; never without it. Give richly. Give with humility. Give with fear, lest you give too little. Give with feeling and with full knowledge.

"At times you may be in doubt about the wisdom of a certain course of action. At such a time you should act in a manner in which thoughtful virtuous knowers of Brahman who are desirous of following the Law do act.

"So also as regards your conduct towards men of ill-fame; it should be like that of thoughtful, virtuous knowers of Brahman who follow the Law.

"This is the message. This is the advice. This is the knowledge. This is the command. Thus should you live and act in life."

20. UPANIṢADIC TEACHING

[In a sense the *Iśa Upaniṣad* is the gist of all Upaniṣadic teaching so far as practical life is concerned. It is an integral gospel. The *Iśa* is comparatively a very short Upaniṣad, but every word of it is pregnant with meaning. It gives us the knowledge of Brahman and advises us to cultivate a healthy vigorous attitude towards life and its problems. It synthesizes the material as well as the spiritual aspect of life. It does not want us to neglect either. It emphasizes that true knowledge consists in right understanding of both as also their correct relation.]

"Whatever is and moves and has its being in this vast universe is the abode of the Lord, it is the body of the Highest Spirit," thus opens the Īśa Upaniṣad.

"Therefore enjoy only those things and only as much of them as is given to you by the Lord. Enjoy but with a spirit of renunciation and not with attachment. Covet not what belongs to others," says the sage further on.

"All idleness and inactivity, all tendency to escape from realities are once for all condemned. A man ought to be ambitious of living full one hundred years and of filling those years with incessant and proper activity. In this material world of ours, there is no other

way out for us. If we live and act properly and disinterestedly no action can bind us down. If we act thus and adopt this attitude we shall be free from the bondage of *Karma* or action.

"But *Karma* or action is not all. We must have knowledge also. We must know the truth, the Ātman, the Brahman which is at the root of all this that is visible and invisible. If we fail to know and realize the Ātman in this life, we practically waste away a fine and splendid opportunity and the dark worlds await us after our death.

"That Ātman, that spirit is unmoving, but it is faster than the mind. Even the gods could not reach or catch it. It is all-pervasive and it is there already before anybody else. It is in the inside and in the outside of all things.

"He who realizes that all things are in the Ātman and that Ātman is in all things, sheds all fear and loves all things as he loves himself. There is a step even beyond this stage. When a wise man sees nothing but the Ātman everywhere round about him, when he realizes the unitary life, neither illusion nor misery can mislead or mar his life.

"That Ātman which is bodyless and without any blemish whatsoever, that Ātman which is pure and spotless and sinless, that which pervades every thing everywhere, creates this

mighty universe and lays down the law once and for ever.

"Here are two worlds before us, the material and the spiritual. The material rests on the spiritual and takes its birth from it. The knowledge of both is essential for success in life and for immortality after death. Synthetic and integral knowledge of this as well as the other world, of matter as well as of spirit, and of their right and real relation is essential if we are to live a complete life and depart hence for the eternal home of the spirit.

"Spiritual truth is often covered over, indeed, by the shining material world of the senses and we are often overwhelmed by the latter and led astray. But we must pray to God to discover for us the truth behind the world of senses and lead us to the life of the spirit. The sun-god is the symbol of spiritual light and illumination. The truth that shines in him and in us is the same. That is the One Spirit.

"This body falls off at death and the spirit is led to its eternal home when freed from the bondage of desire."

This in brief is the teaching of the Īśa Upaniṣad.

GLOSSARY

Āśrama	...	A small colony of seekers after truth, a small hut, a forest dwelling.
Asura	...	A demon.
Ātman	...	Soul, Spirit.
Brahmacāri	...	One who lives the life of spiritual discipline and celibacy.
Brahman	...	The Supreme Spirit.
Brāhmin	...	A man of knowledge, one who knows the Brahman.
Bṛhaspati	...	God of learning, Jupiter.
Darbār	...	Court.
Dharma	...	Religion, Religious law, Duty
Gotra	...	Family, Lineage.
Guru	...	Spiritual preceptor.
Gurukula	...	Home of preceptor.
Karma	...	Action, work.
Kṣatriya	...	A warrior.
Mantra	...	The sacred word.
Pandit	...	A learned man.
Prāṇa	...	Vital power, Breath.
Purāṇa	...	Books of Hindu Mythology.
Rishi	...	Sage.
Sacrifice	...	To propitiate the gods by giving offerings through fire.
Sādhana	...	Spiritual discipline, Spiritual practice.
Sannyāsa	...	Renunciation of the world.
Sannyāsi	...	One who renounces the world.
Śāstri	...	One who knows the Śāstra or the Science.

Śrāddha	...	Anniversary.
Sūtra	...	Any truth or theory briefly stated.
Tapa or Tapas	...	Austerity, Penance, Meditation.
Upanayana	...	Thread ceremony, Initiation ceremony.
Upaniṣads	...	Those portions of the Vedas (the sacred books of the Hindus) which were composed last and which deal with cosmology, psychology, philosophy, spiritual discipline, and such other subjects.
Upāsana	...	Mode of worship, Worship.
Vedas	...	Most ancient sacred books of the Hindus—Four in number.
Veeṇā	...	Stringed-instrument.
Vidyā	...	Knowledge, Art, Learning.
Vijñāna	...	Pure knowledge—Understanding.
Yajña	...	Sacrifice. (See under "Sacrifice").